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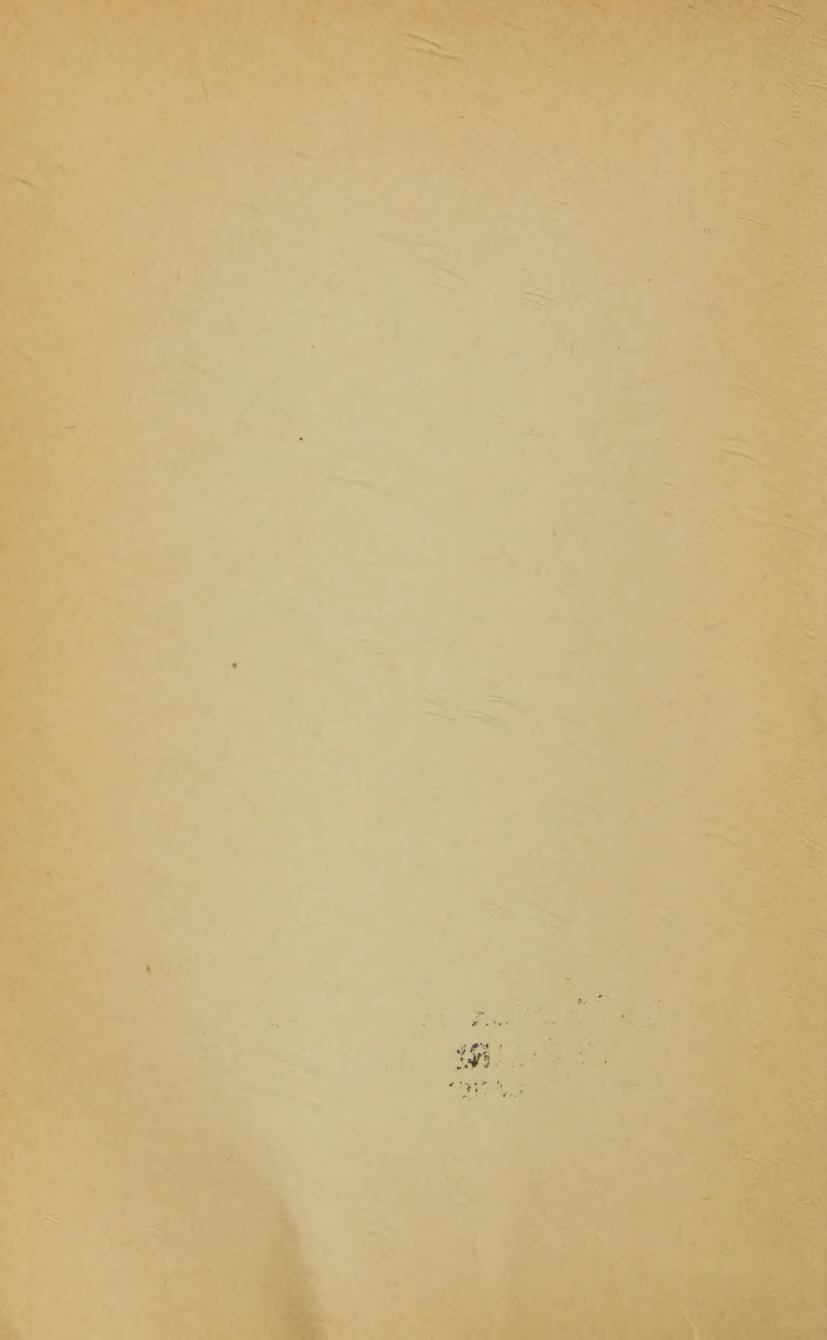
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SELECTIONS FROM  
WILLIAM HAZLITT

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EDITED  
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

WILL DAVID HOWE

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN INDIANA UNIVERSITY

*"Food, warmth, sleep, and a book; these are all  
I at present ask." — HAZLITT*

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## PREFACE

This volume gives, as far as space permits, essays of Hazlitt which distinguish him as a critic of painting, of the drama, of books, and of life. If the lover of Hazlitt fails to find here some favorite essay, let him take consolation from the fact that the present editor has again and again been compelled to omit some essay without which at first he thought the volume would be altogether incomplete. Though restricted, the selection will, it is hoped, introduce the new reader to one of the most interesting men and one of the most stimulating critics, one who could write truthfully, "I have endeavored to feel what is good and to give a reason for the faith that was in me, when necessary and when in my power."

Each of the essays, complete in itself, has been carefully printed from the text which was approved by Hazlitt himself. Even the spelling and punctuation of the original have been scrupulously followed. This will explain certain inconsistencies in punctuation and in the spelling, especially of proper names.

Doubtless Hazlitt, sentimentalist as he was, would have smiled at any editor who should attempt to identify his quotations and to explain his references. However, in the study of an essayist it is interesting to know something of the wealth of his reading, and it is necessary to explain the allusions which, though clear to the reader of his day, are obscure to us of another century.

I desire to express my indebtedness to Mr. A. R. Waller, of Cambridge, England, to Mr. J. Rogers Rees, of Salisbury, England, to Professor G. L. Kittredge, of Harvard University, and

to Professor C. T. Winchester, of Wesleyan University, all of whom have given most helpful suggestions. Professor Winchester has kindly read the entire proof. For their courtesy at all times I thank the authorities of the Boston Public Library, the Harvard University Library, the Bodleian, the British Museum and the Williams Library in London, where I was permitted to read the Crabb Robinson manuscript.

W. D. H.

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# INTRODUCTION

## I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

It is difficult to think of any ten years which have been richer in promise for English literature than the period between 1770 and 1780. Within that decade were born Wordsworth in 1770, Scott in 1771, Coleridge in 1772, Jeffrey in 1773, Southey in 1774, Lamb in 1775, and Hazlitt in 1778. Of this group, two were to be poets who would give new direction to literary work; one was to be the great prose romance writer of our literature, if not of the world; one was to be critic and editor of a great magazine; one was to please by his oriental poetry; one was to be the most beloved of men, the most whimsical of essayists, the best letter-writer; the last was to be one of the most pleasing and stimulating critics of the theater, of painting, of books, and of men.

William Hazlitt was born on the tenth of April, 1778, at Maidstone in Kent. His ancestors on the paternal side were of sturdy Dissenter stock who had probably gone over to Ireland from Holland after the time of William of Orange.

His father, William Hazlitt, was a man of strong character, who had received with honor the degree of M.A. from Glasgow University. At the University he had allied himself with a group of men of liberal political and religious views and had subsequently left the Presbyterian Church and had become a Unitarian minister. During his first charge he married Grace Loftus, the daughter of a nonconformist ironmonger. They were married at Peterborough in 1776 and moved to Marshfield. At Marshfield John was born, who was to become well known as

a miniature portrait painter. Then a "call" came from Maidstone, Kent, in 1770. The ten years at Maidstone were cast in pleasant places, for here the family found a little group of free-thinkers, who liked them and whom they liked, and here the elder William Hazlitt could display his splendid ability in intellectual intercourse with the other ministers of the town, and occasionally with leaders such as Dr. Priestley and Benjamin Franklin. Here, too, were born Margaret in 1771 and William in 1778. Of seven children only these three lived to maturity.

The members of this sturdy Dissenter family were not to spend their lives in the quiet of a Kentish village. The year 1780 took them to Bandon, County Cork, Ireland. The father interested himself in the cause of the American soldiers at Kinsale Prison, who were reported to be subjected to the most cruel abuses. His efforts to secure relief were successful, but brought upon him the suspicion and hatred of the citizens. He saw that his opportunity for usefulness in that community was at an end, and he began to consider where he should go. His devotion to the cause of liberty, naturally strong, had been nourished by what he had heard and seen, and possibly also by reports from his uncle, who was a colonel in the American Revolutionary Army. We are not surprised, then, that the next move for the Hazlitts should be to America.

Our scene shifts to the New World. On the third of April, 1783, the family set sail for New York. They landed on the twelfth of May. Fortunately, the story of these years is recorded in the delightful diary of Margaret,<sup>1</sup> always called Peggy. We have not a more pleasing sketch of the America of that period. We catch glimpses of the wanderings of the family first in New York for two days, then to Philadelphia, where the elder Hazlitt preached for the churches and gave many lectures; then to Weymouth about fifteen miles from Boston; and finally to

<sup>1</sup> Selections from the diary were printed for the first time in "Four Generations of a Literary Family" (1897).

Dorchester, now a suburb of Boston. Peggy has drawn many a picture of the country, has told us about the conditions of travel, and has shown us a very affectionate family in new and interesting surroundings. The country about Weymouth especially pleased her. "The house stood in a most romantic spot, surrounded on three sides by very steep hills that sloped down just in sight of the windows, and were covered with locust trees. These trees grow to a great height, and their yellow blossoms, somewhat like the laburnum, perfumed the air in spring. On the green before the door stood a solitary pear-tree, beyond the shade of which in the hot days William was not allowed to go until four o'clock, when the sun was in some sort shaded by the neighbouring hills. . . . How often have we stood at the window looking at my father as he went up the Hingham Road with William in his nankeen dress marching by his side like one that could never be tired." <sup>1</sup>

After a little more than a year and a half at Weymouth the family moved to Dorchester. For a time the elder Hazlitt was content to preach in Boston and its vicinity, but soon despairing of having a regular charge, decided to <sup>2</sup> return to England. He sailed from Boston in October, 1786, leaving the family in America for the winter. During the season John worked at his painting, doing a miniature of his brother, and William studied Latin. The first bit of writing which we have from the pen of the future essayist was composed at this time.

12th of Nov.

My dear Papa, — I shall never forget that we came to america. If we had not came to america, we should not have been away from one and other, though now it can not be helped. I think for my part that it would have been a great deal better if the white people had not found it out. Let the [others] have it for themselves, for it was made for

<sup>1</sup> "Four Generations," etc., I, 37.

<sup>2</sup> "Oh, most unfortunate resolve! for but a few months after he had sailed old Mr. Gay died, and Dr. Gordon came over to London to publish his work, and at either of these places (Hingham or Salem) my father would have been chosen" ("Four Generations," etc., I, 50).

them. I have got a little of my grammar : sometimes I get three pages and sometimes but one. I do not sifer any at all. Mamma Peggy and Jacky are all well, and I am to. — I still remain your most Affectionate Son,  
William Hazlitt.

The Rev. Mr. Hazlitt, London.

To the care of Mr. David Lewis.

To the regret of Margaret the family left America. They sailed on the fourth of July, 1887, reached Portsmouth on the twelfth of August, and went at once to London.

The sojourn in America seems to have made scant impression upon the memory of Hazlitt, except the taste of barberries which he fondly recalled in later years. "I have it in my mouth still after an interval of more than thirty years, for I have met no other taste in all that time at all like it."

After the autumn spent at Walworth,<sup>1</sup> the father was called to the little church at Wem, near Shrewsbury. For more than a quarter of a century the family lived at Wem, and the younger William spent there most of his years between the age of ten and twenty-two. It would be strange if this period of residence had not left many an impression upon the sensitive temperament of William Hazlitt, or had not often called forth a happy reminiscence of youthful scenes and incidents. His essays glow with the enthusiasm of youth as he recalls a scene in the house at Wem, the colors that rested on the Salopian hills, or some book or picture which he discovered in his many rambles about the country. "If I see a row of cabbage plants, or of peas or beans coming up, I immediately think of those which I used so carefully to water of an evening at Wem when my day's task was done, and of the pain with which I saw them droop and hang down their leaves in the morning's sun." How he looked back upon the experiences of those years was well

<sup>1</sup> "When I was quite a boy my father used to take me to the Montpelier Teagardens at Walworth" ("Why Distant Objects Please," Works, VI, 257). See also "Four Generations," etc., I, 57.

expressed when he said long afterwards, "I never see a child's kite but it seems to pull at my heart."

A letter from William at the age of eleven to his brother John, written in March (1788) after the family had moved to Wem, allows us to see some of the life of the boy. "You want to know what I do. I am a busybody and do many silly things. I drew eyes and noses till about a fortnight ago. I have drawn a little boy since, a man's face, and a little boy's front face taken from a bust. Next Monday I shall begin to read Ovid's "Metamorphoses" and "Eutropius." I shall like to know all the Latin and Greek I can. I want to learn how to measure the stars. I shall not, I suppose, paint the worse for knowing everything else."

Besides the influence of the country and of books, perhaps the most lasting impression came from Hazlitt's father. In politics and religion the elder William Hazlitt had decided views. He had an aptitude for metaphysics and an abiding faith in God. Between the father and son was formed a bond of affection and sympathy. The father looked with joyful pride upon his son's youthful prowess and liked to think of him as a minister expounding the principles of religion and the rights of man. As the years passed this filial love in the work of the essayist blossomed in passages of fervent eloquence. "But we have known some such in happier days who had been brought up and lived from youth to age in the one constant belief of God and of his Christ, and who thought all other things but dross compared with the glory hereafter to be revealed."<sup>1</sup>

An occasional letter from Margaret or from William himself, or a remark in his essays, gives us glimpses of these quiet years at Wem. In 1790 he went on a visit to the Tracys, a Unitarian family in Liverpool. Fortunately we have letters telling of this visit.<sup>2</sup> A few sentences from these letters show a learned young

<sup>1</sup> "On Court Influence," written in January, 1818, Works, III, 254.

<sup>2</sup> "Four Generations," etc., I, 68 ff. See also "The New School of Reform," Works, VII, 193.

man of twelve. "I spent a very agreeable day yesterday, as I read 160 pages of Priestley and heard two good sermons. . . . I do not converse in French, but I and Miss Tracy have a book, something like a vocabulary, where we get the meaning of words. Miss Tracy never does accompts but I take an hour or two every other day." At Liverpool he saw his first play, and went for his first service to the Established Church, which he did not like.

The scant record of these early years shows a boy of perfectly natural tastes, eager and enthusiastic, especially sensitive to line and color, and attracted by everything in the nature of metaphysical speculation. What is right? What is law? What is the basis of government? These questions kept coming back to him to be answered and led him to this conclusion: "How ineffectual are all pleasures except those which arise from a knowledge of having done as far as one knows that which was right to make their possessors happy."<sup>1</sup> One practical outcome of his early thinking was his letter in 1791, published in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, a learned article condemning the outrage against Dr. Priestley, whose house had been burned by a mob in Birmingham.

So Hazlitt grew to be fifteen. The desire to have his son a nonconformist minister prompted the father to try the Hackney Theological Seminary. "My father," wrote the essayist, "would far sooner I had preached a good sermon than painted a Rembrandt." His letters of that year<sup>2</sup> give the scope of his lectures — Sophocles, Quintilian, Greek grammar, mathematics, logic, a bit of Hebrew divinity and philosophy. Even this range did not quite satisfy him, for he was resolved to have a "particular system of politics" so that he would "be able to judge of the truth or falsehood of any principle which I hear or read, and of the justice or the contrary of any political transaction."<sup>3</sup> And as an experiment he tried his hand at an essay "On the Political State of Man."<sup>4</sup> The best parts of the year were the fortnightly

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs," p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Published in "Lamb and Hazlitt," pp. 33-47.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

visits to the studio of his brother John, who was working with success under the tuition of Joshua Reynolds. However, not much at Hackney was to Hazlitt's liking, and 1794 found him again at home with nothing to do.

The next eight years of his life at Wem, though meagerly recorded in an occasional remark in his essays, meant much for Hazlitt. The "long dejection" held him — "the repeated disappointments which have served to overcast and throw into deep obscurity some of the best years of my life."<sup>1</sup> He had been the companion of his brother, the painter; he had tried to draw, he had looked at everything with a painter's eye and had dreamed of himself as painter, but he could do nothing. "I could not write a line. I could not draw a stroke. I was brutish. In words, in looks, in deeds I was no better than a changeling. . . . I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless like a worm by the wayside, crushed, bleeding, lifeless."<sup>2</sup> So *wanderlust* took possession of him. He walked over the country, across the hills of Shropshire into Llangollen, saw the pictures at the Burleigh Gallery, visited the Cathedral at Peterborough, tramped to Wisbeach "to see the town where my mother was born, the farmhouse, the gate where she used to stand when a girl of ten and look at the setting sun."<sup>3</sup>

However, the years of awakening were not far distant. In 1796 Hazlitt found a copy of the *St. James Chronicle* which contained a part of Burke's "Letter to a Noble Lord."<sup>4</sup> Then the world began anew for him. For the first time he realized the power of the written word and took fresh courage. He had vainly tried to "write a single essay, nay, a single page, a sentence." "To be able to convey the slightest conception of my meaning to others in words was the height of an almost hopeless ambition." With enthusiasm he began again his reading, and

<sup>1</sup> "Lamb and Hazlitt," p. 45 (letter from Hackney, October 23, 1793).

<sup>2</sup> "My First Acquaintance with Poets," p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> "Memoirs," pp. 36-37.

<sup>4</sup> Notes, p. 326.

made discoveries which gave him pleasure for a lifetime — Shakspere's plays; Milton's "Paradise Lost"; Boccaccio's "Decameron"; Rousseau's "Confessions" and "New Eloise"; Burke's "French Revolution"; "Letters of Junius"; the dramatists of the Restoration, especially Congreve and Farquhar; the novels of Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, and Sterne; the "Tatler"; "Arabian Nights"; "Don Quixote"; the philosophical writings of Hartley, Berkeley, Hume, and Rochefoucauld. During those plastic years these books stand first in the influences upon his life. As long as he lived he looked back upon them only with joy and recalled with gusto the circumstances under which he had first read them. Books and usually the books of these proud days were to Hazlitt ever one of his "pure joys," for he boasted in later years that he had not read a book through since he became thirty.

Though he loved books and though he got on so ill with his friends, he always gave books a place below real men and women. First of all was the influence of his father; next, perhaps, the lifelong friendship of his brother John. Early in these years he met Godwin, Holcroft, Rickman, the Burneys, and Crabb Robinson. Then a great light flashed across his pathway. As if from a dream the young man of twenty arose with a new strength. He met Coleridge,<sup>1</sup> heard him preach, walked and talked with him, and was invited by him to visit him at Nether Stowey and meet Wordsworth.

For Hazlitt there were probably no two men in all the world more worth knowing. What this meant to Hazlitt he has described with the charm of a poet in one of the finest essays in the language. By leaps and bounds his enthusiasm rose after Coleridge left Wem. After three weeks at Shrewsbury and at Wem, Hazlitt started for a walking tour in Wales, celebrated<sup>2</sup> his "birthday over a fowl, a bottle of sherry, and Rousseau's 'New Eloise'"; then set out for Nether Stowey<sup>3</sup> to visit the

<sup>1</sup> "My First Acquaintance with Poets," pp. 176 ff. <sup>2</sup> Notes, p. 366. <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 367.

Coleridges. On the way he spent two days at Bridgwater, where he discovered "Paul and Virginia." Arriving at Nether Stowey, he walked over with Coleridge to Alfoxden. Wordsworth had gone to Bristol to see a play, but Dorothy Wordsworth received them, and after lunch brought out the manuscript of Wordsworth, and Coleridge read aloud the poems which in a few months were to appear as "The Lyrical Ballads." That evening they returned to Nether Stowey. Next morning Wordsworth came over for a day, and so back and forth for three weeks this remarkable intercourse continued. Hazlitt went back to think it all over. Those days of talk with Coleridge and Wordsworth had set the young man of twenty on a new path.

By 1799 he met Crabb Robinson, who has left in his autobiography a most interesting record of many men and women of that time in England and Europe.<sup>1</sup> A passage from his Reminiscences of 1799 deserves our immediate attention. "Another interesting acquaintance which commenced at this period was Will. Hazlitt, a man who has left a deservedly high reputation as a critic, but who, at the time I first knew him, was struggling against a great difficulty of expression, which rendered him by no means a general favourite in company. His bashfulness, want of words, slovenliness in dress &c. made him the object of ridicule. . . . The moment I saw him I concluded he was an extraordinary man. He had few friends and was flattered by my attentions. He was about my age. He used frequently to breakfast with me, and I rendered him a great service, introducing him to Anthony Robinson, who procured him his first job by inducing Johnson to publish his first work. . . . I was under great obligations to Hazlitt as the director of my taste. It was he who first made me acquainted with "The Lyrical Ballads,"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is certainly to be regretted that this autobiography in MS. in the Williams Library, London, is accessible to the large majority of readers only in a very unsatisfactory and incomplete edition of Thomas Sadler (editions of 1869 and 1872). Our extracts are taken from the manuscript itself.

<sup>2</sup> Published in the autumn of 1798. See Notes, p. 367.

and the poems generally of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, and Southey, with whom he was through life afterwards so closely connected, whom he so ill-treated, and who became so important to me. Hazlitt was also, like myself, a great admirer of Godwin and Holcroft, and also about this time became acquainted with them."<sup>1</sup>

What was Hazlitt to do? He had been spending much of his time with his brother John in London, trying to learn to paint. The year at Hackney had shown the folly of his attempting to preach; the years at Wem had nourished his love for metaphysics, but metaphysics offered no prospect of a livelihood. The meeting with the poets, and his study of their work, had stirred in him a love of writing, but the words failed to come. There was still one thing left. He had always looked upon faces and upon nature with the eyes of the painter, he had always liked to draw, and he had passed countless hours in his brother's studio. He loved pictures with an enthusiasm born of a real love of the art. Here, certainly, was your real painter!

The next move was to Paris and the Louvre, with all its treasures, the Mecca, then as now, of the aspiring painter. In October, 1802, he wrote six<sup>2</sup> letters to his family which described his plans of copying the masterpieces for friends in England, and which abounded with enthusiastic admiration of certain masters. Of the pictures of Rubens he wrote: "I intend to copy two out of the five I am to do for Railton. . . . I promised Northcote to copy Titian's portrait of Hippolito de Medici. . . . I shall have gone on at the rate of a portrait in a fortnight. . . . I generally go to the Museum about half past nine

<sup>1</sup> Another passage from the diary of the same date tells of the Hazlitt family. "In passing through Wem in Shropshire I saw a very worthy old Presbyterian Minister—no worse than an Arian, I presume, the father of the Hazlitts. William, who had become my friend, was not there, but John, the miniature painter, was. I liked the good old man and his wife, who had all the solidity (I do not mean stolidity) and sober earnestness of the more respectable noncons. There was also a maiden sister (Peggy). Altogether an amusing and agreeable group in my memory."

<sup>2</sup> Published in "Memoirs," etc., I, 85-102.

or ten o'clock, and continue there till three or four." He worked in Paris for four months and returned in January with at least eleven copies made for the people who had ordered them.

Though now and then a fear escaped him that he could not be a Rembrandt or a Titian, both of whom he idolized, yet he persevered and set about diligently to turn his work to some practical account. For almost three years he wandered in the north of England as an itinerant painter, doing portraits of Wordsworth,<sup>1</sup> Coleridge,<sup>2</sup> Hartley Coleridge, and an old woman<sup>3</sup> near Manchester in 1802 or 1803. At Gateacre, near Liverpool, he painted the head of Dr. Shepherd,<sup>4</sup> friend of his father and father of Sally Shepherd, for whom he seemed to have had a passing affection; next the portrait of his father,<sup>5</sup> the doing of which gave to both father and son much pleasure; finally a portrait of Charles Lamb in "the costume of a Venetian senator."<sup>6</sup> This last is the only specimen of Hazlitt's painting which is still preserved.

Here the career of the painter came abruptly to a close. Afterwards he worked occasionally on a portrait or upon his favorite subject, Jacob's Ladder, but he no longer relied upon painting as a profession. Doubtless the consciousness of inferiority to his favorite painters, combined with a lack of patience necessary to acquire the technique of the art, convinced him that success did not lie that way.

The portrait of Lamb in 1804 probably introduced Hazlitt to this delightful man. They met, perhaps, in the early months of

<sup>1</sup> See Southey's letter to Rickman, December 14, 1803.

<sup>2</sup> See Coleridge's letter to Sir George Beaumont, October 1, 1803; also Wordsworth's letter to Sir George Beaumont, June 3, 1805, thanking him for the present of Coleridge's picture. "We think, as far as mere likeness goes, Hazlitt's is the better, but the expression in Hazlitt's is quite dolorous and funereal; that in this is much more pleasing, though actually falling far below what one would wish to see infused into a picture of Coleridge." <sup>3</sup> "On the Pleasure of Painting," p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> Douady, "Vie de William Hazlitt," p. 356.

<sup>5</sup> "Four Generations," etc., I, 83.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Lamb's letter to Mrs. Coleridge, October 13, 1804. This painting is at present in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

that year.<sup>1</sup> In her letter<sup>2</sup> to Mrs. Coleridge Mary Lamb wrote: "I have lately been talking of you with Mrs. Hazlitt [wife of John Hazlitt]. William Hazlitt is painting my brother's picture, which has brought us acquainted with the whole family. I like William Hazlitt and his sister [Peggy] very much indeed, and I think Mrs. Hazlitt a pretty good-humoured woman." The meeting at Godwin's has been made memorable by Hazlitt's description.<sup>3</sup> They were talking, so Hazlitt tells us, of man, man as he is and as he is to be. One thing was said by Coleridge, another by Godwin, something by Holcroft, then Lamb stammered out slowly, "Give me man as he is *not* to be." From that moment Hazlitt became his friend. The friendship lasted, with one or two interruptions, to the end of Hazlitt's life.<sup>4</sup> The spirit of the Wednesday evenings at Lamb's apartments in Mitre Court has been expressed by no one so well as by Hazlitt.<sup>5</sup> In that period of more than twenty-five years there were many harsh words and bitter feelings, but the one who remained true to Hazlitt was the man most worth knowing in London.

Of these years of Hazlitt's life only an incident or two may be gleaned from the letters of his friends. Hazlitt accompanied Lamb to Drury Lane on the memorable tenth of December, 1806, when Lamb's farce, "Mr. H.," was produced with pathetic results. Charles and Mary, Hazlitt, and Crabb Robinson were in the pit.<sup>6</sup> The year 1807 is significant for an incident which brought the two friends together in a practical joke,<sup>7</sup> conceived

<sup>1</sup> Lucas, "Life of Charles Lamb," p. 248 (edition of 1910).

<sup>2</sup> Mary Lamb's letter to Mrs. Coleridge, October 13, 1804. This painting is at present in the National Portrait Gallery, London. <sup>3</sup> P. 196.

<sup>4</sup> Lucas, "Life of Charles Lamb," pp. 248-252; W. C. Hazlitt, "Lamb and Hazlitt," *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Crabb Robinson affords us many a glimpse. "In that humble apartment I spent many happy hours and saw a greater number of excellent persons than I had ever seen collected together in one room."

<sup>6</sup> "On Persons One would Wish to have Seen," p. 212; "On the Conversation of Authors," Works, VII, 24. See also Lucas, "Life of Charles Lamb," *passim*; Hazlitt's account in his essay on "Great and Little Things," Works, VI, 232.

<sup>7</sup> The joke is described in W. C. Hazlitt, "Lamb and Hazlitt," p. 61.

probably by Lamb and Joseph Hume of the Victualing Office, Somerset House, after the manner of the hoax practiced by Dean Swift on the almanac maker, Partridge. The report was circulated that "W. H., a portrait painter, in Southampton Buildings, Holborn, put an end to his existence by cutting his throat in a shocking manner." All the details were vividly presented. To this report Hazlitt offered a Petition and Remonstrance, protesting and setting forth proofs that he was still alive. In a wonderful letter of four pages folio to Hume, Lamb accepted this statement as either a forgery or a communication from the dead. The incident closed with a short note from Hume to Hazlitt, warning him against Lamb.

It would be strange, indeed, if the names of women did not slip into the pages of Hazlitt's biography. As a young man he was very shy, especially in the presence of young women, who always made game of his awkward manner. However, while he was a traveling painter in the north he had a passing affection for a Miss Railton of Liverpool, for a Miss Walton, and for a certain Sally Shepherd, daughter of Dr. Shepherd, who was an intimate friend of the elder Hazlitt. Apparently without much reason De Quincey has insisted that Dorothy Wordsworth had repelled his attentions. Fate had something else in store for Hazlitt in the person of Sarah Stoddart, daughter of Lieutenant John Stoddart, a retired and disappointed naval officer. As early as 1799 Hazlitt and John Stoddart, the brother, had become acquainted, but there was never any affection between them. Mary Lamb and Sarah Stoddart had been friends for reasons which we can scarcely understand.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately the letters of Mary have been kept, but no one of Sarah's is forthcoming. It is difficult for us to conceive what attraction Hazlitt found in Sarah. She was not romantic or imaginative. She had little physical charm, and was selfish and determined. She had been pursued by various suitors, who are now mere names to us —

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Gilchrist, "Mary Lamb," chaps. vi-ix.

Mr. Turner, Mr. White, Mr. Dowling, and "William of partridge memory." Her turning down of each seemed to cause her little concern. However, the fateful affair between Hazlitt and Sarah began to be serious, and, after considerable uneasiness on her part regarding the marriage settlement, culminated in a decision to marry. Just when Hazlitt and Sarah first came together is still a matter for conjecture,<sup>1</sup> but no evidence brought forward thus far convinces us that they knew each other before 1806. There was considerable fear on the part of friends that the new marriage would not be an unqualified success. We have no letters from Sarah Stoddart, but nothing in her life shows that she was much concerned with anything but the marriage settlement. Of Hazlitt there remains one letter, written soon after the hoax mentioned above. "What has become of you?" he writes. "Are you married, hearing that I was dead (for so it has been reported)? . . . For, indeed, I never love you as well as when I think of sitting down with you to dinner on a boiled scrag end of mutton and hot potatoes." The letter ends with suggestions about the marriage settlement. In February, 1808, he went to Salisbury to see her and to make plans for the approaching nuptials. Mary Lamb was to be bridesmaid, and wrote letters which are full of interest, chatting about wedding presents and wedding gowns. For some reason Charles Lamb was not at first included in the wedding party, but when on the first of May, 1808, the marriage took place at St. Andrew's Church, Holborn, John Stoddart and wife, and Charles and Mary Lamb were the only guests. The account of the wedding is recorded in a letter by Charles Lamb to Southey: "I was at Hazlitt's

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. C. Hazlitt ("Memoirs," I, 117) thinks that the William Hazlitt mentioned by Mary Lamb in her letter of September, 1803, was our William Hazlitt, and that she was writing to him at the time. Mr. J. Rogers Rees (*Notes and Queries*, April 11, 1908) holds a similar opinion. Professor Douady ("Vie de William Hazlitt," p. 360) thinks it was not William Hazlitt but some earlier William. The reading of all the evidence to be had leads me to agree with Professor Douady. How any one can read all the letters of Mary Lamb and think otherwise I cannot conceive!

marriage and had like to have been turned out several times during the ceremony. Anything awful makes me laugh.”<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the marriage Hazlitt and his wife withdrew to Sarah’s cottage<sup>2</sup> at Winterslow, a little village about six miles from Salisbury.

Life began in earnest for the new family at Winterslow. By a process of elimination Hazlitt had decided upon writing as his profession. Already he had published, but nothing with profit. He had long been occupied with “The Essay on Human Action” (1805), a metaphysical essay, the object of which, as he afterwards said,<sup>3</sup> was “to remove a stumbling-block in the metaphysical doctrine of the innate and necessary selfishness of the human mind.” “The Free Thoughts on Public Affairs” he had published at his own expense in 1806. In “A Reply to Malthus” (1807) he had set forth his views, denying the proposition of Malthus regarding population. Then he turned to that worthy and popular book by Abraham Tucker, “Light of Nature Pursued”<sup>4</sup> and condensed its seven volumes into one (1807). Finally, in the same year he prepared “The Eloquence of the British Senate”<sup>5</sup> in which he incorporated selections from the best Parliament speeches with explanatory comment. It will be readily seen that little financial reward could be expected from such a list, and yet from Hazlitt’s point of view the work was well worth the doing. He had the opportunity to set down more clearly his philosophical speculations; he had studied with special profit the work by Tucker, and had read with interest and enthusiasm the best English orations. By the publication of the selections he received favorable notices from the press, which he could turn to his account when occasion served.

<sup>1</sup> Written August 9, 1815.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. J. Rogers Rees (*Notes and Queries*, July 25, 1908) has cleared up the question of Sarah Hazlitt’s property at Winterslow, and has shown that there is no basis for the statement of Mr. W. C. Hazlitt that her annual income from “her cottage” was £120.

<sup>3</sup> “Letter to William Gifford,” *Works*, I, 403.

<sup>4</sup> “Four Generations,” etc., I, 96.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 97.

Next he occupied himself with an English grammar, which he published in 1810, and then proceeded with the "Memoirs of Holcroft," which, however, did not appear till 1816. His extensive reading in English and French philosophy led him to consider writing a history of philosophy. With his reading and writing Hazlitt had not entirely given up painting. At times he worked industriously, especially on his favorite subject, Jacob's Ladder,<sup>1</sup> by which he wished to symbolize the ascent of the human spirit toward light, "toward the spiritual heaven of grand ideas." So the months passed at Winterslow.

The absence of the Hazlitts from London was felt by the Lambs. Mary Lamb wrote to Sarah Hazlitt, December 10, 1808: "You cannot think how very much we miss you and H. [Hazlitt] of a Wednesday evening. All the glory of the night, I may say, is at an end. . . . Hazlitt was most brilliant, most ornamental as a Wednesday man, but he was a more useful one on common days when he dropped in after a quarrel or a fit of the glooms." After repeated urging the Lambs consented to go down to Winterslow. The trip was planned, then postponed on account of Mary's illness. The letters describing the details are full of humorous expectancy. The party was to consist of four, Charles and Mary Lamb, Martin Burney, and Edward Phillips. Mary was to take bed coverings, Burney was to sleep in the kitchen, and all were to help pay the expenses of entertainment. The visit was finally accomplished in the fall of 1809. We have glimpses of it from one of Lamb's letters.<sup>2</sup> "I have but this moment received your letter dated the 9th instant, having just come off a journey from Wiltshire where I have been with Mary on a visit to Hazlitt. The journey has been of infinite service to her. We have had nothing but sunshiny days and daily walks from eight to twenty miles a day: have seen Wilton, Salisbury,

<sup>1</sup> See "Lamb and Hazlitt," pp. 99-102, for Hazlitt's letter to his wife (who had gone to London for a short visit with the Lambs), written about April, 1809.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Lamb's letter to Coleridge, October 30, 1809.

Stonehenge, etc.”<sup>1</sup> A second visit in the following July (1810) was equally happy, but did not end so fortunately for the health of Mary Lamb. On their return to London they went by the way of Oxford and Blenheim, accompanied by Hazlitt. There are more delightful references to these visits in the letters of the Lambs and in Hazlitt’s essays.<sup>2</sup>

We read of visits of the Hazlitts to London<sup>3</sup> early in 1811. In his diary of February 18, 1811, Crabb Robinson called at “W. Hazlitt’s” on the 4th of March; he “took tea with W. Hazlitt and had two hours pleasant chat with him.” On the 6th he found Hazlitt at the Lambs; on the 9th “called on W. Hazlitt”; on the 10th Hazlitt called on Robinson; on the 29th “spent the evening with W. Hazlitt. Smith, Hume, Coleridge, Lamb there . . . Coleridge and Hazlitt discussed about abstract ideas”; on the 30th he “found Coleridge and W. Hazlitt at Lamb’s.” So it appears that at least William Hazlitt spent much of March in London, though they did not move to London till late that year or early in 1812.

On the twenty-sixth of September, 1811, their son William was born. By way of congratulation Mary Lamb wrote, “I never knew an event of the kind that gave me so much pleasure as the little long-looked-for, come-at-last’s arrival”; and Charles could not help showing his good heart even in a short note, “Well, my blessing and Heaven’s be upon him, and make him like his father, with something of a better temper and a smoother head of hair: and then all the men and women must love him.”<sup>4</sup>

Since his days at Hackney (1794) Hazlitt had kept in close touch with London. His brother John, who was gaining a respectable patronage as a miniature painter, always welcomed

<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt, “Farewell to Essay Writing,” p. 000. See also Mary Lamb’s letter to Sarah, November 7, 1809. Mrs. Gilchrist, “Mary Lamb,” p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Hazlitt, “On the Conversation of Authors,” Works, VII, 42; also “The Character of Country People,” Works, XI, 309.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Lamb writes on the thirtieth of November, 1810, to Sarah, urging her and Hazlitt to make them a visit. <sup>4</sup> Letters bearing the date, 2d October, 1811.

him. His circle of acquaintances and friends was gradually widening, and he saw more and more that to London he must come if he wished to profit by his writing. Though he had published nothing which earned for him a popular reputation, his power of expression was developing and his original talk and independent thinking were bringing to him a group of the best literary folk. As Charles Lamb intimated in his letter on the occasion of the birth of the new William, Hazlitt's temper was not of the best. He was naturally much depressed and soured by the events of the political world. Life had begun for him, he tells us, with the French Revolution, and Napoleon was his idol, "the champion in the flesh of the rights of the oppressed." To see his romantic hero enmeshed in the net by a group of unthinking, hypocritical aristocrats galled him unspeakably. To see some of the best men in England, — Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, and Landor, — men who had boasted of their revolutionary allegiance, on their knees, as he thought, with feeble recantations, tried his patience to the uttermost and made him exclaim in despair, "By Heaven, I think I'll endure it no more."

Moreover, his years of married life had not been happy. Hazlitt was certainly not an ideal husband. He was irregular in his habits, slovenly in dress, irritable and buoyant by turns, angry that the world did not seem to serve him well. That his marriage had not turned out happily was not all his fault. Sarah Hazlitt was utterly incompetent in all matters requiring domestic economy. She was untidy, selfish, and eager for a kind of tawdry show.<sup>1</sup> She had a fair amount of understanding, but possessed little sentiment, and surely no sympathy with Hazlitt and his work. Just why they ever got so far as marriage is as

<sup>1</sup> One bit of description of Sarah Hazlitt's visit to a lady at Bayswater makes us wonder why William did not, like Andrea del Sarto, continue his painting of portraits with his wife as model!

It was a wet day and she had been to a *walking-match*. She was dressed in a white muslin gown, a black velvet spencer and a Leghorn hat with a white feather.

Lucas, "Life of Lamb," pp. 317-318.

difficult for us to conceive as it is easy to understand why they could not be happy together.<sup>1</sup> Much sooner than he expected he grew tired of sitting down with Sarah "to dinner on a boiled scrag end of mutton and hot potatoes" — if so bountiful a repast had ever been prepared by the improvident Sarah. In despair he decided to move to London.

In London the Hazlitts took the house at 19 York Street, which had been occupied by Milton from 1652 to 1658, and where he had begun "Paradise Lost" and had written several of his sonnets and much of his prose. The house was owned by Jeremy Bentham, who lived in an adjoining mansion, and whom Hazlitt has vividly described<sup>2</sup> walking in his garden.

Hazlitt's first work after he came to town was the course of public lectures on the history of English philosophy, which he delivered at the Russell Institution.<sup>3</sup> The most interesting contemporary record of these lectures is the diary of Crabb Robinson, under the date January 14, 1812: "Heard Hazlitt's first lecture on the history of English philosophy. He seems to have no conception of the difference between a lecture and a book. His lectures can't possibly be popular, hardly tolerable. He read a sensible and excellent introduction on philosophy and on Hobbes, but he delivered himself in a low monotonous voice, with his eyes fixed intently on his book, not once daring to look on his audience; he read, too, so rapidly that no one could possibly follow him, at the same time the matter he read was of a kind to require reflection." The diary of this date abounds in comments by Robinson and others upon Hazlitt and his lectures.<sup>4</sup> Hazlitt was

<sup>1</sup> The humor of the misalliance is sometimes brought out by incidents related by his contemporaries; for example, the christening party to which Haydon was invited and which did not take place ("B. R. Haydon and his Friends," p. 57).

<sup>2</sup> See Hazlitt's essay on Bentham in "The Spirit of the Age," Works, IV, 189.

<sup>3</sup> Plan of the lectures will be found in "Memoirs," I, 192 ff.

<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to suppress one's irritation that this diary should have been so badly edited by Sadler. Not only are most important passages omitted from the daily entries, but what has been printed has repeatedly been altered without apparent reason.

much depressed over his lectures, and threatened to give up the whole series. Friends offered bits of advice, and all seemed interested and sympathetic. On the next Tuesday night (January 21) he "improved vastly." . . . "I hope he will now get on. He read half his first lecture at B. Montague's last night. He was to read the whole, but abruptly broke off and could not be persuaded to read the remainder. Lamb and other friends were there." At the lecture, Robinson writes, "he was interrupted by applause several times." The lectures followed on consecutive Tuesday nights, with two exceptions, March 10 and 24. Of the former date Robinson tells us: "W. H. wrote to say he is obliged to postpone his lectures and I fear his debts oppress him, so that he cannot proceed. I wish I could afford him assistance, for I know no state of suffering more dreadful than that of indigent genius." The last of the series was given on April 27. Of the last lecture Robinson writes, "Very well delivered and full of shrewd observation."

From the Robinson diary it appears that Hazlitt continued his work as portrait painter.<sup>1</sup> On the 30th of June, 1812, Robinson called. "W. Hazlitt was operating on Thomas" (the brother of Crabb Robinson). On December 24, "I therefore ventured to ask about my brother's picture which he promises me and I believe I shall get it." But this work was apparently of little consequence, though it may have yielded a spare penny. His real work was as reporter to the gallery of the House of Commons, followed by employment on the *Morning Chronicle* under the editorship of James Perry. How this new engagement came about appears from certain entries in Robinson's diary, September 30, 1812: "Met Dr. Stoddart and with Miss Lamb with whom I chatted about Hazlitt. H., at the same time that he went to Perry and received from him a conditional promise of being employed by him as a reporter, sent Dr. S. to Walter [of the *Times*] and Walter has promised to do something for H., but by

<sup>1</sup> See March 10, 1811, etc.

this injudicious conduct H. has exposed himself to the likelihood of offending either W. or P. However the prospect of his finding the means of subsistence is by this greatly improved." On December 24 he wrote: "Called late on C. Lamb. The party there. Hazlitt I was gratified by finding in his high spirits. He finds his engagement with Perry as Parliamentary Reporter very easy, and the 4 guineas a week keeps his head above water. He seems quite happy." In this way Hazlitt's career as a writer for newspapers and magazines began and lasted to the end of his life. From parliamentary reporter he passed to the position as dramatic critic, writer on art, and miscellaneous essayist. In 1813 he was called upon by Francis Jeffrey to review books for the *Edinburgh Review*, and in turn he contributed to the *Examiner*, *Champion*, and the *Times*. The account of Hazlitt's connection with these publications we have reserved for more detailed discussion in a separate section.

Hazlitt's finances were never prosperous, but he was earning a fair income, perhaps never more than five or six hundred pounds a year. However, his tastes were simple and his habits not extravagant. Soon after he moved to London he began to drink heavily, but soon realizing that he could not bear up under the habit, he abstained completely from fermented liquors, substituting strong tea, which he drank often and in great quantities as long as he lived.<sup>1</sup>

Robinson writes of the handsome room in which he found Hazlitt. On April 29, 1813, "spent the evening which I have not done for a long time before at C. Lamb's. At whist as usual. Chat with Hazlitt who finds himself made comfortable by a situation which furnishes him with the necessaries of life, keeps his best faculties not employed but awake, and I do not think it is much to be feared that his faculties will therefore decline. He has a most powerful intellect and needs only

<sup>1</sup> "Literary Remains," p. xlvi. Patmore, "Friends and Acquaintances," I, 302-308.

encouragement to manifest this to the world by a work which could not be overlooked." So Hazlitt was occupied with criticism and essay writing. His articles became the subject of discussion among his friends and found staunch supporters as well as aggressive enemies. His splendid discriminating criticism of art drew hearty admiration from Flaxman; his blind devotion to Buonapartism was not approved but disregarded. His attacks on Wordsworth and Coleridge caused many heated discussions and alienated many friends. At any rate, he was being talked about. Not only did his writing provoke discussion; he was sought after as a talker. Robinson writes December 9, 1816: "I went to Alsager's. There I met the Lambs, Hazlitt, &c. . . . Hazlitt was sober, argumentative, acute, and interesting. I did not converse with him but enjoyed his conversation with others." Miss Mitford has left an amusing incident,<sup>1</sup> showing something of Hazlitt's temper as well as the regard in which he was beginning to be held. After Hazlitt had left the *Morning Chronicle* "Perry remembered him as an old acquaintance and asked him to dinner, and a large party to meet him, to hear him talk and show him off as the lion of the day. The lion came, smiled and bowed, handed Miss Bentley to the dining-room, asked Miss Perry to take wine, said once 'Yes' and twice 'No' and never uttered another word the whole evening. The most provoking part of this scene was that he was gracious and polite past all expression, a perfect pattern of mute elegance, a silent Lord Chesterfield, and his unlucky host had the misfortune to be very thoroughly enraged without anything to complain of."

The Mr. Alsager mentioned above was the commercial editor of the *Times*, and also a member of the Committee of the Surrey Institution. Through him it was proposed that Hazlitt should give a course of lectures on the English Poets. The lectures were delivered in the early part of 1818 and met with unqualified success. Even Crabb Robinson, who had broken

<sup>1</sup> A. G. L'Estrange, "Life of Mary Russell Mitford," II, 47.

with Hazlitt on account of his attacks upon Wordsworth, was delighted with the lectures. Talfourd's account of them is most enthusiastic.<sup>1</sup> "He was not eloquent in the true sense of the term, for his thoughts were too weighty to be moved along by the shallow stream of feeling which an evening's excitement can rouse. He wrote all his lectures and read them as they were written ; but his deep voice and earnest manner suited his matter well. He seemed to dig into his subject — and not in vain."

The first lectures had been so successful that Hazlitt undertook a second course on the English Comic Writers, and then a third on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth. The three series appeared in three volumes, respectively in the years 1818, 1819, 1820. Immediately after the publication of the first, Gifford of the *Quarterly Review* pounced upon the author. He warned his readers against this "incoherent jumble of grand words." *Blackwood* joined in the chase, and though the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Scotsman* had occasionally discriminating reviews of some of Hazlitt's writing, they followed the lead of the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood*, and applied to Hazlitt a list of epithets which has probably not been equalled in the annals of abuse. He was called an "incendiary," a "Radical," a "Buonapartist," a "cockney scribbler," a "slang-whanger," a "slanderer of the human race," and "pimpled Hazlitt." That Hazlitt could take care of himself the world soon learned. In a letter, probably of 1818, Keats expressed what many people felt : "Hazlitt has damned the bigoted and the blue-stockinged — how durst the man ? He is your only good damner, and if ever I am damned I should like him to damn me." Naturally of a shy disposition, Hazlitt did not wish to pick a quarrel, but he was stung to the quick by the epithets which came from every direction. Gifford had been unfair, insolent, and arrogant, and Hazlitt began to brood over this injustice and the kind of man who had attacked him. To add injury to insult, Gifford's attacks

<sup>1</sup> See "Literary Remains," pp. xlvii ff.

had practically stopped, so Hazlitt thought, the sale of the "Characters of Shakespear's Plays."<sup>1</sup> He went straight to his subject and made a sketch as clear as a portrait of this man, who became for the moment the incarnation of all that was mean, dishonest, and vile. Though most of the invective of this time is not pleasant reading, we must admit the "Letter to Gifford" (1819) to the category of best satiric letters, equal in virulence and concise expression to Johnson's "Letter to Chesterfield" and Burke's "Letter to a Noble Lord."

While we are occupied with these bitter quarrels between Hazlitt and his critics, we should not forget that there was a Mrs. Hazlitt. Hazlitt had not forgotten her, although he had not lived with her since 1819. He had led a nomadic existence in London, trying first this lodging place and then that in different parts of the city. Sarah Hazlitt had probably returned to the house at Winterslow, but came occasionally on visits to London. Only one thing they had in common—an affection for their son William. The boy was the link that bound them for a long time after they ceased to live together. Realizing their utter incompatibility, they decided to secure a formal divorce.<sup>2</sup> Under the circumstances this was a legal impossibility in England, but the divorce might be easily obtained after forty days'

<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt wrote: "My book sold well—the first edition had gone off in six weeks—till that review came out. I had just prepared a second edition, but then the *Quarterly* told the public that I was a fool and a dunce; and more, that I was an evil-disposed person; and the public, supposing Gifford to know best, confessed it had been a great ass to be pleased when it ought not to be, and the sale completely stopped" ("Memoirs," I, 228).

That the effect of Gifford's abuse was probably not so bad as Hazlitt described has been shown by A. W. Pollard. See biographical note to his edition of "The Characters," pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> That his own personal experience is shadowed in the advice to his son, we may readily surmise. "If you ever marry, I would wish you to marry the woman you like. Do not be guided by the recommendation of your friends. Nothing will atone for or overcome an original distaste. It will only increase from intimacy, and if you are to live separate, it is better not to come together. There is no use in dragging a chain through life unless it binds one to the object we love" (Hazlitt, "Advice to a Schoolboy," Works, XII, 435).

residence in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> They proceeded to Edinburgh to wait for the forty days. They occasionally met over a cup of tea and discussed prospects. While Hazlitt lectured at Glasgow, Sarah visited parts of Scotland and Ireland. The disgraceful affair came to an end with the granting of the divorce in June, 1822, and both returned to England greatly relieved. However, they saw something of each other and Sarah visited her former husband's mother and sister, Peggy, and wrote affectionate letters to the latter.

Their determination to secure a divorce may have been strengthened by Hazlitt's infatuation for Sarah Walker, a tailor's daughter, whose mother kept the lodging house in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, where Hazlitt was then living. The whole story<sup>2</sup> is offensive to us now, but we may have some consolation from the fact that we now have *all* the details, and that they might easily have been worse. Procter described the girl as having "a round small face, glassy eyes, a snake-like walk and being very silent and demure, with a steady, unmoving, uncomfortable gaze upon the person she was addressing." What her real character was we cannot quite know, since we have only Hazlitt's account, and even that makes us respect her wisdom in refusing to marry Hazlitt. But there seems to be no reason to doubt the genuineness of Hazlitt's passion, although his "Liber Amoris," which gives us the story, does not bear all the marks of genuine passion. Perhaps the most disgusting aspect of the whole affair was his desire to tell everybody about it. Procter gives us the account.<sup>3</sup> "His intellect was completely subdued by an insane passion. He was, for a time, unable to think or talk of anything else. He abandoned criticism and books as idle matters, and fatigued every person whom he met by expressions of her love, of

<sup>1</sup> For a complete account, see Birrell, "William Hazlitt," pp. 170 ff. For all the details and the letters of Sarah Hazlitt, see Le Gallienne's edition of "Liber Amoris."

<sup>2</sup> "Liber Amoris," edited by Le Gallienne.

<sup>3</sup> Procter, "Autobiographical Fragments" (1873).

her deceit, and of his own vehement disappointment. This was when he lived in Southampton Buildings, Holborn. Upon one occasion I know that he told the story of his attachment to five different persons in the same day, and at each time entered into minute details of his love story. 'I am a cursed fool,' said he to me. 'I saw J—— going into Wills' Coffee House yesterday morning: he spoke to me. I followed him into the house, and whilst he lunched I told him the whole story. Then I wandered into the Regent's Park, where I met one of M——'s sons. I walked with him some time, and on his using some civil expression, by Jove, Sir, I told him the whole story. (Here he mentioned one other instance which I forget.) 'Well, Sir, (he went on) I then went and called on Haydon, but he was out. There was only his man, Salmon, there, but, by Jove, I could not help myself. It all came out — the whole cursed story. Afterwards I went to look at some lodgings at Pimlico. The landlady at one place, after some explanations as to rent, &c., said to me very kindly, 'I am afraid you are not well, Sir?' 'No, ma'am,' said I, 'I am not well,' and on enquiring further, the devil take me if I did not let out the whole story from beginning to end.'” At least Hazlitt saw no humor in the affair. “I am in some sense proud that I can feel this dreadful passion — it gives one a kind of rank in the kingdom of love.” So he wrote down and sold for £100 his “*Liber Amoris*.” The book consists of three parts: first, conversations supposed to have been held between the anonymous author and the girl; second, extracts actually addressed to an unnamed friend (Patmore), in which are unfolded the passion, fury, and delusion of the writer, who declared the persistency of his devotion; third, three letters to another friend (Sheridan Knowles), giving the conclusion of the affair — the treachery, wantonness, and hypocrisy of the girl who would have nothing to say to him, preferring the addresses of another lodger.

As might be expected, such a book as the “*Liber Amoris*” pretended to be has met with a reception of mingled acquiescence

and disgust. De Quincey<sup>1</sup> called it "an explosion of frenzy. He threw out his clamorous anguish to the clouds and to the winds and to the air, caring not who might listen, who might sympathize, or who might sneer — the sole necessity for him was to empty his overburdened spirit." Of various comments<sup>2</sup> we quote only two, the first by Mrs. Jameson. "Of all the histories I have read of the aberrations of human passion, nothing ever struck me with a sort of amazed and painful pity as Hazlitt's 'Liber Amoris.' The man was in love with a servant girl, who in the eyes of others possessed no particular charms of mind or person, yet did the mighty love of this strong, masculine, and gifted being lift her into a sort of goddess-ship and make his idolatry in its intense earnestness and reality assume something of the sublimity of an act of faith, and in its expression take a flight equal to anything that poetry or fiction have left us. It was all so terribly real, he sued with such a vehemence, he suffered with such resistance that the powerful intellect reeled, tempest-tost, and might have foundered but for the gift of expression."

At the other extreme is Austin Dobson, who, we believe, has put the case more aptly and more nearly as it stands to-day. "The whole sentimental structure of the 'Liber Amoris' now sinks below the stage and joins the realm of things unspeakable: 'vile kitchen stuff, fit only for the midden.'"

We may readily imagine the glee with which the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood* read this book, and recognized at once their victim. They put forth their best efforts, but nothing that they could conceive could injure the man who had already allowed to be printed a piece of such humiliating self-debasement. Perhaps some consolation may be gained from the fact that during this period Hazlitt wrote some of his best essays, and "his name

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. V, edited by Masson.

<sup>2</sup> See also *American Whig Review*, January, 1847; *Temple Bar*, 1881, p. 330; *Academy*, September 7, 1889; and Introduction to Le Gallienne's edition.

and character were but momentarily dimmed by what, indeed, was but a momentary delusion."<sup>1</sup>

Meantime one other affair seemed for a time to cast a shadow over Hazlitt. In 1820 the *London Magazine* was established, with John Scott as its editor, a very agreeable man and brilliant writer. The magazine included essays by Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, and Lamb. Soon after it had started, it made a furious onslaught upon *Blackwood*, whether from a desire to court notoriety or to avenge some of the wrongs done to Hazlitt and others of their contributors. Lockhart, the son-in-law of Scott, editor of *Blackwood*, felt aggrieved, especially since his name had been mentioned in the offending articles, and demanded an apology from Scott, who was supposed to be the author of the attacks. The affair went from bad to worse. A duel was fought and Scott was mortally wounded.<sup>2</sup> The circumstances were most distressing. Enemies of Hazlitt (especially the poet Campbell) tried to make the world believe that he had been the provoking cause of the duel, but no one to-day can find the slightest evidence to incriminate Hazlitt.<sup>3</sup>

Within two years after his divorce, in 1822, and his infatuation with Sarah Walker, he married again, apparently as unfortunately as before. His second wife was a Mrs. Bridgewater — it had been Sarah Shepherd, Sarah Stoddart, Sarah Walker, this time it was Isabella — the former wife of a Colonel Bridgewater, who had left her three hundred pounds a year. "A cynic might point a moral from the fact that the only events of Hazlitt's life which were utterly free from the intrusion of passion were his ventures into matrimony."<sup>4</sup> On September 1, 1824, they

<sup>1</sup> Remark by his son.

<sup>2</sup> The duel took place at Chalk Farm, February 16, 1821. Scott died on the 27th, leaving a wife and two children.

<sup>3</sup> The statements of Scott were printed in the *London Magazine*, February, 1821. The whole question has been discussed by Mr. Andrew Lang in his "Life of Lockhart," I, 250 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Paul Elmer Moore's essay on Hazlitt in "Shelburne Essays," Vol. II.

started to the Continent, going through Paris, where they visited the galleries and saw some plays at the theaters; thence to Lyon, Turin, Florence, Rome, Venice, through Switzerland, down the Rhine, through Holland, and thence home in October, 1825. Mrs. Hazlitt, the second, informed her husband that she did not care to go home with him. She returned to Scotland<sup>1</sup> to live, while Hazlitt and his son, who had joined them somewhere on the Continent, came back to London. Sketches of the travels appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* and were subsequently published in 1826, with the title "Notes of a Journey through France and Italy."<sup>2</sup> These notes make very interesting reading. They describe scenes in his coach rides, visits to picture galleries, especially in Paris and Florence. They contain vivid descriptions of faces of people whom he sees on the way; they express opinions on many subjects, and reveal a keen observer of the manners and customs of the people. He writes enthusiastically of the great pictures, most eloquently of natural scenery in Italy and Switzerland. He is disappointed with Rome.<sup>3</sup> "This is not the Rome I expected to see." He writes a splendid description of the illumination of St. Peter's and adds: "After all St. Peter's does not seem to me the chief boast or most imposing display of the Catholic religion. Old Melrose Abbey, battered to pieces and in ruins as it is, impresses me much more than the collective pride and pomp of Michael Angelo's great work." He likes the palaces of Venice.<sup>4</sup> "I never saw palaces anywhere but at Venice." But, after all, he is glad to be back in England. "However delightful or striking the objects may be abroad, they do not take the same hold of you, nor can you identify yourself with them as at home."

Under the lead of a cruel fate Hazlitt had set to work on a life of Napoleon. With blind obstinacy Hazlitt had idolized him

<sup>1</sup> We know almost nothing of this woman, not even her maiden name. Hazlitt met her in a stagecoach. She died in Scotland in 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Works, IX, 83 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. chap. xix.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. chap. xxiii.

and regarded him as the veritable savior of the people. He had watched with great rejoicing his rise from obscurity into world-wide notoriety; he had seen his idol subjected to most complete humiliation. In casting about for a subject of a work which he wished to leave as a monument he could conceive of nothing better than the defense of this picturesque hero. At Vevey, on his tour in 1825, he had confided his purpose to Medwin:<sup>1</sup> "I will write a Life of Napoleon, though it is yet too early; some have a film before their eyes; some want magnifying glasses; none see him as he is in true proportion." For three years Hazlitt worked untiringly, giving what time he could spare from his more profitable miscellaneous essays. The task often oppressed him. In the preface, which at first was not printed as a preface, Hazlitt wrote: "There were two other feelings that influenced me on the subject—a love of glory, when it did not interfere with other things, and the wish to see personal merit prevail over external rank and circumstance. I felt pride (not envy) to think there was one reputation in modern times equal to the ancients, and at seeing one man greater than the throne he sat upon." The first two volumes were published in 1828 and the last two in 1830. The work attracted little attention, partly because it appeared subsequent to a life by Walter Scott (1827), a name to conjure with, but not of sufficient magic to sell a tedious and superficial life of an unpopular hero. Hazlitt's work met the same fate, partly because the subject was hateful to the public, and largely because Hazlitt was writing before time had cleared away the rancor of party strife. The "Life" had no sale, and, combined with the failure of the publishers, meant a total loss of profits for all the labor expended during three busy years. His loss was out of all proportion to the merit of the work, for though it had no rank as history, it possessed a style which is often brilliant in its vivid and picturesque description of characters and incidents.

<sup>1</sup> The friend of Byron in his "Conversation with Lord Byron," 1824.

The remaining years of Hazlitt's life were without important incident. Since 1818 he had gone often to "The Hutt," a secluded tavern near Winterslow, and spent many a day alone, dreaming over the happy memories of the past and writing some of his most delightful essays. He liked to walk across the country about Salisbury, over to Stonehenge, and through the lanes of Wiltshire. Glimpses of days spent there in summer and in winter appear in the essays, which come to be more personal and autobiographical. In London he lived first in one place, then in another—in Down Street, in Half Moon Street, in Bouverie Street, and finally at No. 6 Frith Street, Soho. Poverty pressed upon him and kept him busily writing to the end. He had few friends, but he must work, and with his usual clear mind he wrote the last essays, "The Free Admission" and "The Sick Chamber," before the final summons. Through the summer of 1830 he first knew the struggle with death. He longed for his mother, and begged that she might be brought to him, but she was eighty-four years old and in Devonshire, and could not come. The fight was not to be long. On the eighteenth of September, 1830, he died in the presence of his son and his dearest friend, Charles Lamb. His last words seem strange, "Well, I've had a happy life."

Lamb, the best friend any man could ever have, summed it all up in his letter to Southey:<sup>1</sup> "From the other gentleman [Hazlitt] I neither expect nor desire (as he is well assured) any such concessions. What hath soured him, and made him suspect his friends of infidelity towards him, when there was no such matter, I know not. I stood well with him for fifteen years (the proudest of my life) and have ever spoken my full mind of him to some to whom his panegyric must naturally be least tasteful. I never in thought swerved from him; I never betrayed him; I never slackened in my admiration of him; I was the same to him (neither better nor worse), though he could

<sup>1</sup> First printed in *London Magazine*, October, 1823.

not see it, as in the days when he thought fit to trust me. At this instant he may be preparing for me some compliment above my deserts, as he has sprinkled many such among his admirable books, for which I rest his debtor; or for anything I know or can guess to the contrary, he may be about to read a lecture on my weaknesses. He is welcome to them (as he was to my humble hearth) if they can divert a spleen or ventilate a fit of sullenness. I wish he would not quarrel with the world at the rate he does; but the reconciliation must be effected by himself, and I despair of living to see that day. But protesting against much that he has written and some things which he chooses to do; judging him by his conversations, which I enjoyed so long and relished so deeply, or by his books, in those places where no clouding passion intervenes, I should belie my own conscience if I said less than that I think W. H. to be in his natural and healthy state one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing. So far from being ashamed of that intimacy which was betwixt us, it is my boast that I was able for so many years to have preserved it entire; and I think I shall go to my grave without finding, or expecting to find, such another companion."

With the true devotion of a sincere friend Lamb enjoyed Hazlitt's writing to the end of his life. Only a few months before he died he said, "I can read no prose now, though Hazlitt sometimes, to be sure, but then Hazlitt's worth all modern prose writers put together."<sup>1</sup>

Before we turn altogether from the life of Hazlitt we must quote a passage from Talfourd's<sup>2</sup> description of Hazlitt's personal appearance: "In person, Mr. Hazlitt was of the middle size, with a handsome and eager countenance, worn by sickness and thought, and dark hair, which had curled stiffly over the

<sup>1</sup> Report of a breakfast at Crabb Robinson's, June 19, 1834, by N. P. Willis. See Lucas, "Life of Charles Lamb," p. 645.

<sup>2</sup> "Literary Remains," p. xlvi. See also Patmore, "Friends and Acquaintances," II, 302 ff.

temples, and was only of late years sprinkled with grey. His gait was slouching and awkward, and his dress neglected; but when he began to talk, he could not be mistaken for a common man. In the company of persons with whom he was not familiar, his bashfulness was painful; but when he became entirely at ease, and entered on a favourite topic, no one's conversation was ever more delightful. He did not talk for effect, to dazzle, or surprise, or annoy, but with the most simple and honest desire to make his view of the subject entirely apprehended by his hearer. There was sometimes an obvious struggle to do this to his own satisfaction; he seemed labouring to bring his thought to light from its deep lurking place; and, with modest distrust of that power of expression which he had found so late in life, he often betrayed a fear that he had failed to make himself understood, and recurred to the subject again and again, that he might be assured he had succeeded."

## II. AS CRITIC OF THE DRAMA

Important among Hazlitt's writings are his criticisms of the stage. Not only were they his first continuous work after he devoted himself to the pursuit of literature, but they marked an epoch in the history of theatrical criticism. Before Hazlitt's time the honest reviews of plays were not known. Leigh Hunt knew the situation, perhaps, better than any man, and described it in his "Autobiography."<sup>1</sup> "Puffing and plenty of tickets were the system of the day. It was an interchange of amenities over the dinner table, a flattery of power on the one side and puns on the other, and what the public took for a criticism on a play was a draft upon the box office or reminiscence of last Thursday's salmon and lobster sauce. The custom was to write as short and as favorable a paragraph on the new piece as could be; to say that Bannister was 'excellent' and Miss Jordan

<sup>1</sup> "Autobiography," chap. vii, p. 152.

'charming'; to notice the crowded house or invent it, if necessary; and to conclude by observing that 'the whole went off with éclat.'" Leigh Hunt saw the opportunity for a new department, and when the *Examiner* appeared, introduced as one of its most popular features a succession of appreciative comments on plays, actors, and theaters. The *Examiner* was a weekly journal, independent in politics and strongly radical, but in such troublous times soon came to grief by its publication of libelous articles. For the attacks on the prince regent its editors, John and Leigh Hunt, were imprisoned in February, 1813. Though the confinement did not interfere with the publication of the paper, it prevented Hunt from seeing plays.<sup>1</sup>

Hazlitt had the good fortune to be in London in the position as parliamentary reporter on the *Morning Chronicle*, the leading Whig paper, which was owned and edited by James Perry. Both Perry and Hazlitt saw the opportunity for the new line of criticism, and to Hazlitt was delegated the new work.

He wrote his first criticism for the issue of October 18, 1813, and contributed to that paper some of his best articles, such as those on Mrs. Siddons, Kean, and other famous actors. The inevitable conflict, however, which has often happened between the man of business and the man of genius, was not long postponed, and ended by bringing to a close Hazlitt's connection with Perry's paper on May 27, 1814. Miss Mary Russell Mitford<sup>2</sup> knew both men and wrote in her letter: "I was at Tavistock House and very well remember the doleful visage with which Mr. Perry used to contemplate the long column of criticism, and how he used to execrate 'the damned fellow's damned

<sup>1</sup> This was a splendid era for the English stage. The Kembles—Charles, John, and Mrs. Siddons—were at their zenith. Suett, Munden, Bannister, Mathew, Elliston, Liston, Booth, Young, and Master Betty were conspicuous in plays of the Elizabethan period, of the Restoration, and of the eighteenth century.

For a sketch of theatrical conditions of the time, see Introduction to "The Dramatic Essays of Leigh Hunt," edited by Archer and Lowe.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Mary Russell Mitford," edited by L'Estrange, II, 47. See also Hazlitt's essay, "On Patronage and Puffing," Works, VI, 292.

stuff' for filling up so much of the paper in the very height of the advertisement season. I shall never forget his long face. It was the only time of the day that I ever saw it long or sour. He had not the slightest suspicion that he had a man of genius in his pay, not the most remote perception of the merit of writing, nor the slightest companionship with the author. He hired him as you hire your footman, and turned him off (with as little or less ceremony than you would use in discharging the aforesaid worthy personage) for a very masterly critique on Sir Thomas Lawrence, whom Mr. Perry, as one whom he visited and was being painted by, chose to have praised."

From the *Chronicle* Hazlitt turned to Hunt's paper, the *Examiner*. His first criticism in that paper appeared in July, 1814. He wrote a few articles in the following summer and became the regular critic from March 19, 1815, to June 8, 1817. During the autumn of 1814 Hazlitt was regularly employed by the *Champion*, a weekly edited by John Scott. This engagement lasted from August 14, 1814, to January 8, 1815. From the summer of 1817 to the spring of 1818 he wrote for the *Times* articles on Shakspeare's plays and other well-known plays.<sup>1</sup> His high regard for the *Times* was afterwards expressed in his advice for "any one who has an ambition to write and to write his best in the periodical press, to get, if he can, a position in the *Times* newspaper, the editor of which is a man of business and not a man of letters. He may write there as long and as good articles as he can without being turned out of it."<sup>2</sup>

During these years Hazlitt wrote miscellaneous essays for the periodicals to which he was contributing, and he prepared for publication two books, which consisted largely of his dramatic criticisms, "Characters of Shakespear's Plays" (1817) and "View of the English Stage" (1818). The latter volume was

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs," II, 310; "Literary Remains," p. xlv.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to "View of the English Stage," Works, VIII, 174.

simply a collection of articles which had appeared in the *Chronicle*, *Champion*, *Examiner*, and the *Times*. When the *London Magazine* was established in January, 1820, under the editorship of John Scott,<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt undertook to write an article each month<sup>2</sup> on the acted drama in London. The second edition<sup>3</sup> of the "View of the English Stage" included a large part of these essays, though many personages were omitted, and what remained was sometimes changed.

For his work as theatrical critic Hazlitt could not be said to have had special training. He had not "grown up in the green room." When he was twelve years of age he had seen at Liverpool<sup>4</sup> "Love in Many Masks," and a farce "No Song, No Supper," performed by Kemble, Suett, Dignum, Miss Romanzini, and others. In 1796 he had seen John Kemble as Coriolanus, he had come to know the actor Liston, but he had never been a regular playgoer.<sup>5</sup> During the winter of 1802-1803, while he worked in the Louvre, Paris, we have no record of his attendance at any theater. He may have seen plays at Shrewsbury during the years which he spent at home in Wem, but of this we know nothing. After his meeting with Lamb the two together went occasionally to the theater, as we learn from Mary Lamb's letters. On the fourth or sixth of July, 1806, she wrote to Sarah Stoddart: "They [Charles and Hazlitt] came home from Sadler's Wells so dismal and dreary dull on Friday evening that I gave them both a good scolding, quite a setting to rights, and I think it has done some good, for Charles has been very cheerful ever since." On the tenth of the following

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. xxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> Hazlitt wrote ten articles; none appeared in November, and the article for October was not by Hazlitt. The content of each of these papers was given in the December issue.

<sup>3</sup> 1821.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. xiii; "Memoirs," p. 17. See also "The New School of Reform," Works, VII, 179.

<sup>5</sup> Before he became a critic of the stage he admitted he had not been at the theater "more than a half-a-dozen times" in his life. See "Letter-Bell," Works, XII, 235.

December<sup>1</sup> they sat together in the pit to see Lamb's farce, "Mr. H.," condemned to oblivion. Knowing Lamb's fondness for the theater, we may assume that they went for an occasional evening to see some favorite actor. After his marriage and removal to the country he made only a rare visit to London till he and his wife returned in 1811 or 1812.

Hazlitt's criticisms of the theater<sup>2</sup> are a fair guide to the theaters, plays, and players of his time. He wrote of Drury Lane, Covent Garden, Haymarket, Lyceum, The King's Theater and the minor theaters, the Surrey, Adelphi, the Coburg, The Aquatic, The East London. He discussed winter and summer plays, pantomimes, operas, and oratorios. He reviewed not only his favorite plays, "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Cymbeline," "Richard III," "Romeo and Juliet," "Everyman in his Humour," "School for Scandal," "Beggar's Opera," "New Way to pay Old Debts," but all of Shakspeare's dramas and a large number of Restoration and eighteenth-century plays. He loved the Kembles, he discovered Kean for the London public, praised Macready, Booth, Bannister, Miss Stephens, and Mrs. Siddons,<sup>3</sup> and in all his criticism he was fair and, above all, discriminating.

Qualifications for a capable critic of the stage Hazlitt certainly had. He liked the stage. "We like the stage because we like to talk about ourselves." He liked it because it was "the text and school of humanity." "We do not much like any person or persons who do not like plays." Furthermore, he read widely

<sup>1</sup> See "On Great and Little Things," Works, VI, 232.

<sup>2</sup> Hazlitt's essays, which may be considered in general as dramatic criticism, are as follows: "On Modern Comedy," "Mr. Kean's Iago," "On 'Midsummer Night's Dream,'" "On the 'Beggar's Opera,'" "On Actors and Acting" in Works, Vol. I; "Characters of Shakespear's Plays," in Vol. V; "Dramatic Writers Contemporary with Shakspeare," in Vol. VI; "On Patronage and Puffing," "Whether Actors ought to sit in Boxes," "On the Disadvantages of Intellectual Superiority," "On Great and Little Things"; "A View of the English Stage," "Miscellaneous Dramatic Essays," "The English Comic Writers" (Chaps. ii, iii, iv, viii in Vol. VIII).

<sup>3</sup> "I observed that of all the women I had ever seen or known anything of, Mrs. Siddons struck me as the grandest" ("Conversations of James Northcote," Works, VI, 333).

and wisely in the drama of the Elizabethan era, the Restoration, and the eighteenth century. Again, he had a high conception of his duty as critic both to the player and to the public. "Though I do not repent of what I have said in praise of certain actors, yet I wish I could retract what I have been obliged to say in reprobation of actors. . . . I never understood that the applauded actor thought himself personally obliged to the newspaper critic; the latter was merely supposed to do his duty."<sup>1</sup> He praised Kean because he saw in him a genius. This favorable notice "produced a great impression and gave rise to the report, absolutely without foundation, that the critic had received £1500 from the management of Drury Lane to puff Kean."<sup>2</sup> Finally, the enthusiasm and eloquence of Hazlitt's style took hold of people and made his favorable reviews much sought after both by the player and the playgoer.

That his theatrical notes make good reading now after almost a hundred years may not be a compliment upon their value as dramatic criticism. Indeed, their bookishness has always been noted. He liked above everything the play which he could read. True he reveled in the memories of the good past days at the theater; he was thrilled by the eloquence of Kemble and Kean, and he liked the crowd of "happy faces in the pit," and the atmosphere of the playhouse. He watched closely the entrances and exits of the actors, their eyes, faces, hands; listened for the cadences of the spoken sentences, and marked the differences in an actor on successive evenings. He rarely analyzed the play as a play — he was not concerned with the technique of the verse; he was interested in the series of fine speeches and the groups of diversified characters. He did not give a well-rounded comment of the play, but a eulogy of Kemble as Sir Giles Overreach, Miss O'Neill as Lady Teazle, Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth, Macready as Othello, Kean as Iago or Shylock or

<sup>1</sup> "Dramatic Essays," Works, VIII, 177.

<sup>2</sup> Birrell, "Life of Hazlitt," p. 109.

Richard III. He thought Shakspeare too great for the stage! "Not only are the more refined poetical beauties, the minuter strokes of character, lost to the audience, but the most striking and impressive passages, those which having once read we can never forget, fail comparatively of their effect except in one or two instances." He enjoyed the old plays, the great actors, much as he liked old books or some striking incident of his youth.

### III. AS CRITIC OF PAINTING

In his relation to the art of painting<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt stood alone among his contemporaries. From his birth he had been associated with painters; he had studied in the Louvre; he had talked art with Flaxman, Northcote, and Haydon; he had read the works of Richardson and Sir Joshua Reynolds; finally, he had been a painter. How well qualified he was by nature and training to write of the art of painting can best be seen in his pages of criticism. No one of his contemporaries was his equal, either in natural aptitude or knowledge of what the painter was trying to do. Hazlitt never thought out in his criticisms of painting, any more than he did in his criticisms of the drama, the principles that underlie the art. Certain principles he insisted upon, it is true, but they were not formally fashioned into a system. They were some of his feelings about art. "Art must be true to nature." This was, first of all, important. The lesson to be learned from the Elgin marbles<sup>2</sup> was "that the chief excellence of the figures depends on their having been copied from nature,

<sup>1</sup> The writings of Hazlitt which deal with painting especially are the following: In "Table Talk," "On the Pleasure of Painting," "On Certain Inconsistencies in Sir Joshua Reynold's Discourses," "On a Landscape of Nicholas Poussin," "On the Picturesque and Ideal," Works, Vol. VI; "Conversations of James Northcote," Works, Vol. VI; in "Plain Speaker," "On Sitting for One's Picture," "On a Portrait of an English Lady," Works, Vol. VII; on the "Works of Hogarth," Works, Vol. VIII; "The Principal Picture Galleries in England," Works, Vol. IX; "Notes of a Journey through France and Italy," Works, Vol. IX; "Miscellaneous Essays on the Fine Arts," Works, Vol. IX.

<sup>2</sup> "On the Elgin Marbles," Works, IX, 326.

and not from imagination." Pictures must have a meaning, they must express something. He liked to talk about "the poetry of Passion," "the learning of Titian." It is significant that he included Hogarth among the "comic writers of the eighteenth century."

In his criticism of painting as of the drama, he tried to be honest and fair. He did not hesitate to defend a rising young artist, and thus gave encouragement to such men as Wilson, Haydon, and Turner. Of the latter he wrote, before Ruskin was born, "In landscape Turner has shown a knowledge of the effects of air and of powerful relief in objects which was never surpassed." He turned his contemporaries to Hogarth. He was as ready to point out a fault in Claude or Poussin, whom he idolized, as he was to extol a virtue in Haydon or Wilson.

The pleasure of it all was the thing. It was to him inexpressible joy to be able to see the masters in Paris and in Florence, and to go again and again to the collection at Burleigh House and to take Lamb to Oxford and to Blenheim. This went along with his delight in creating for himself, of which he wrote appreciatively in his splendid essays, "On the Pleasure of Painting." "My taste in pictures is, I believe, very different from that of rich and princely collectors. . . . I should like to have a few pictures hung round the room that speak to me with well-known looks, that touch some string of memory—not a number of varnished, smooth, glittering gew-gaws." This joy of association with pictures he was able constantly to communicate to others. At a time when little attention was paid to art criticism, Hazlitt "claimed for it the dignity of a branch of literature and expended on it the wealth of his ever-fervid and impassioned imagination."<sup>1</sup>

In estimating Hazlitt as a critic of painting we should remember the changes which have occurred in the vocabulary of

<sup>1</sup> Gosse's preface to his edition of "Conversations of James Northcote," p. xxvii.

art criticism, as well as the priority of Hazlitt's work and his recognition of the fact that few of his readers would ever see the pictures which he described. Hazlitt helped people to enjoy pictures, and to enjoy the picturesque in the world about. "I am a slave to the picturesque," he wrote once. He saw about him the charm of line and color, and could describe with powerful vividness any face which had impressed him.

#### IV. AS CRITIC OF BOOKS AND MEN

In a most interesting essay on Hazlitt, Professor Saintsbury<sup>1</sup> has written: "He was in literature a great man. I am myself disposed to think that for all his excess of hopelessly uncritical prejudice he was the greatest critic that England has yet produced." Whether we agree wholly with this estimate we must admit him into the select group of three or four best English critics. The range of his criticism of books is practically the whole of English literature.<sup>2</sup> With interest and appreciation he has touched every period, with boundless enthusiasm and discrimination he has described especially the drama of the Restoration and the periodical essayists and novelists of the eighteenth century. He admired the great writers, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, and wrote of them with hearty appreciation. Most certainly he was not radical or revolutionary in his literary heroes, and yet he did not hesitate to speak out openly when he saw merit. For the writers of the Queen Anne period he had especial praise. He appreciated with rare intelligence their forceful prose, and considered the style of Swift and Arbuthnot as well-nigh model prose. Indeed, his remarks on these writings

<sup>1</sup> G. E. Saintsbury, "Essays on English Literature."

<sup>2</sup> Hazlitt's criticism of literature is comprised chiefly of the following: "Characters of Shakespear's Plays" (1817), "Lectures on the English Poets" (1818), "Lectures on the English Comic Writers" (1819), "Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth" (1820), "The Spirit of the Age" (1825).

might very well serve as a manual for clear and effective composition. He preferred Steele to Addison, Thomson to Cowper, Gay to Prior. He saw Pope's excellence without requiring him to conform to the standards fixed for poetry at any one time. He liked Blair's "Grave," Butler's "Hudibras," Warton's sonnets, Suckling's poems. He was passionately fond of Congreve, Ossian, Burke's prose, Scott's novels, and the novels of the preceding century. His criticism was largely personal. "There are people who cannot taste olives — and I cannot much relish Ben Jonson, though I have taken some pains to do it, and went to the task with every sort of good will." He was influenced very largely by his private associations and by his sympathy for the character of the writer. Nevertheless, in the criticism of his contemporaries in "The Spirit of the Age" he was uncommonly fair, and few of his judgments need to be revised a hundred years afterwards. He did not appreciate Shelley and Keats, but wrote most intelligently and appreciatively of the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the novels of Scott, and the prose of Burke, though he had harsh things to say of them as men. Wordsworth was "the most original poet now living"; Coleridge was "the only man I ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius"; Scott was "the greatest, wisest, meanest . . . of mankind"; Gifford was "a low-bred, self-taught, servile pedant, a doorkeeper and a lacquey to learning." Apparently Hazlitt was trying to follow the lead of one whom he greatly admired — "Montaigne may be said to have been the first who had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man." Allowing for prejudices, however, we should have difficulty to find another critic who has shown such breadth of interest as to include with such just appreciation so many writers so widely separated in time and in achievement.

The contemporaries of Hazlitt attempted to silence him as a critic by pointing to his lack of reading and the repetitions which recurred so frequently in his work. To these men Hazlitt

replied: "I have been found fault with for repeating myself, and for a narrow range of ideas. To a want of general reading I plead guilty and am sorry for it, but perhaps if I had read more I might have thought less."<sup>1</sup> Such a characteristic remark! Hazlitt did not wish to have a mere literary reputation; he despised those who had their ideas from books alone. Nevertheless, besides an extensive reading of English literature—who of his day had read more widely in the literature of his own language? he knew some of Schiller's plays, Rousseau, Montaigne, Le Sage's "Gil Blas," Rabelais, Dante, Boccaccio, and "Don Quixote." . . . Most of these he knew intimately—a meager list one has to admit, but not unworthy. It is well for us who live in the day when there are too many books and too few careful readers to remember what we have just quoted, "If I had read more, I should have thought less."

In his thinking and his writing Hazlitt had never hit upon historical or philosophical criticism.<sup>2</sup> He was an emotional critic. By his criticism of Milton's sonnets he expressed his aim—"picking out the beautiful passages that I like."<sup>3</sup> "Taste is ability to appreciate genius"; "Fine taste consists in sympathy"; "He who finds out what there is in a picture rather than he who finds what there is not"; "So that the ultimate and only conclusive proof of taste is not indifference but enthusiasm"—these are the keynotes of his essay "On Taste." Critics were to be the tasters for the public. "A genuine criticism should, as I take it, reflect the colors, the light and shade, the soul and body of a work." "In the criticisms written on the model of the French school about a century ago . . . we are left quite in the dark as to the feelings of pleasure or pain to be derived from the genius of the performance or the manner in which it appeals to the imagination; we know to a nicety how it squares

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs," II, 259.

<sup>2</sup> For his ideas on criticism see essays "On Taste," Works, XI, 450 ff., and "On Criticism," Works, VI, 214; also "On Periodical Essayists," pp. 9 ff.

<sup>3</sup> "On Milton's Sonnets," Works, VI, 174.

with the thread-bare rules of composition, not in the least how it affects the principles of taste."<sup>1</sup> "Why trouble Pope or any other author for what they have not and do not profess to give?" All sound and true. According to Hazlitt, his friend Joseph Fawcett was an ideal critic. "He had a masterly perception of all styles and of every kind and every degree of excellence. . . . He did not care a rush whether a writer was old or new, in prose or in verse — 'What he wanted,' he said, 'was something to make him think.'" "He gave a cordial welcome to all sorts, provided they were the best in their kind." These extracts show with sufficient clearness that Hazlitt aimed at no analytical method in his criticism. He does not belong to the modern school of metaphysical critics who "suppose the question Why? to be repeated at the end of every decision; and the answer gives birth to interminable arguments and discussion." Nor is there in Hazlitt insistence upon the historical estimates. He is content with good work well done. "If a man leaves behind him any work which is a model of its kind, we have no right to ask whether he could do anything else or how he did it, or how long he was about it."<sup>2</sup>

Hazlitt contributed little to the group of critical principles which from time to time in the last hundred years have been enunciated with greater or less clearness. Of poetry he wrote, "Many people suppose that poetry is something to be found only in books, contained in lines of ten syllables, with like endings, but wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of the sea, in the growth of a flower that spreads its sweet leaves through the air, and dedicates its beauty to the sun, there is poetry. . . . Poetry is not a branch of authorship; it is the stuff of which our life is made."<sup>3</sup> This was a long step beyond the critics of the preceding century, such as Johnson, or even Addison, who would not

<sup>1</sup> "On Criticism," Works, VI, 217.

<sup>2</sup> "On Genius and Common Sense," Works, VI, 31.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 35.

listen to a definition of poetry which did not hedge it within fixed rules and requirements. The first expression of modern critical principles was the publication of the Prefaces by Wordsworth, in which he discussed the relation of Imagination and Fancy. This discussion, which had come from Lessing, Richter, and A. W. Schlegel, did not interest Hazlitt. Richter distinguished Imagination as the faculty of genius which constructs organic wholes, from Fancy which forms arbitrary aggregates. The union of opposites became the fundamental formula of romantic art. Hence there was no inconsistency in the combination of tragedy and comedy, of humor and pathos, in a single play. With this conception Hazlitt was in perfect accord. "Poetry is the stuff of which our life is made." Coleridge, however, went farther. He recognized the need of order and rules — "Poetry must embody, in order to reveal itself," and unlike the eighteenth-century revisers of Shakspeare who wished to leave out or smooth over the irregularities of the Elizabethan dramatists, Coleridge looked for the reason of the so-called irregularities, and he wished not to make Shakspeare over but to find and to understand the evidences of organic structure. Coleridge passed the torch on to Carlyle, who not only searched for the central and vivifying purpose with proper historical perspective, but he wished to emphasize the dynamic quality of the work and make it exercise its influence on the thought and lives of men. In his essay on Goethe he wrote, "To determine with any infallibility whether what we call a fault *is* in very deed a fault, we must have settled two points, first what the poet's aim really was, and how far this aim accorded, not with us and our individual crotchets, but with human nature, and the nature of things at large; with the principles of poetic beauty, as they stand written, not in our text-books but in the hearts and imaginations of all men."

Such as it was — and a very good kind, if not the best — the criticism of Hazlitt performed a great service. He interested

people in fields hitherto almost untrodden ; he taught his readers that they had within themselves powers of appreciation of which they had not dreamed ; he gave new encouragement to the author who saw for the first time the possibility of a large and sympathetic reading public ; and finally he sharpened the critical faculties of his readers and introduced a new enthusiasm into reading and talking about books. His judgments have formed a remarkably large amount of the present estimate of much of English literature. Indeed, it is difficult to name an English critic who has succeeded in this particular to an equal degree. Of him Harriet Martineau wrote, " In Hazlitt we lost the Prince of Critics of his time, and after he was gone there were many who would never look at a picture, or see a tragedy, or ponder a point of morals, or take a survey of any public character without a melancholy sense of loss in Hazlitt's absence and silence." <sup>1</sup> There could be no more fitting conclusion to our discussion of Hazlitt as a critic than the words of Thackeray.<sup>2</sup> " Hazlitt was one of the keenest and brightest critics that ever lived. With partialities and prejudices innumerable, he had a wit so keen, a sensibility so exquisite, an appreciation of humor or pathos or even of the greatest act so lively, quick, and cultivated, that it was always good to know what were the impressions made by books or men or pictures on such a mind ; and that, as there were not probably a dozen men in England with powers so varied, all the rest of the world might be rejoiced to listen to the opinions of this accomplished critic."

#### V. AS PERSONAL ESSAYIST

To many readers Hazlitt is most interesting as a writer of miscellaneous essays and more especially as the personal and autobiographical essayist. The mention of a half dozen of his

<sup>1</sup> Harriet Martineau, " History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace," Book IV, chap. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> A review of the " Spirit of the Age " in the *Morning Chronicle*, 1845.

titles calls up some of our happiest memories of books — "My First Acquaintance with Poets," "On Going a Journey," "A Farewell to Essay-Writing," "The Feeling of Immortality in Youth," "On the Pleasure of Painting," "On Reading Old Books," or "Of Persons One would Wish to have Seen." It is doubtless of such as these that Stevenson was thinking when he said, "We are all mighty fine fellows, but we cannot write like Hazlitt."<sup>1</sup>

Again there are those suggested by a philosophical or ethical theme, "On Thought and Action," "Why Distant Objects Please," "On the Knowledge of Character," "On the Fear of Death," "On the Past and Future," "On Living to One's-Self," "On Effeminacy of Character," "On Conduct of Life," "The Spirit of Obligation," "On Antiquity," "On Great and Little Things," "On Personal Identity," "Self-Love and Benevolence," "Main Chance," "On a Sun-Dial," "On the Feeling of Immortality"; then an occasional paper on the foibles or peculiarities of people, "Ignorance of the Learned," "On People with One Idea," "On the Pleasures of Hating," "On Vulgarity and Affectation," "On the Disadvantages of Intellectual Superiority," "On Consistency of Opinion," "On Disagreeable People," "Londoners and Country People," "On Editors," and "On the Shyness of Scholars"; a few that are entertaining for views on writing and criticism, "On Taste," "On Criticism," "On Familiar Style," "On the Aristocracy of Letters," "The Picturesque and the Ideal," "On the Judging of Pictures," "On Application to Study"; a group, perhaps the most delightful, which abound in intimate personal reminiscences, "My First Acquaintance with Poets," "On the Conversation of Authors," "Of Persons One would Wish to have Seen," "On the Pleasure

<sup>1</sup> A few of Stevenson's titles suggest a closer bond of sympathy between the two sentimentalists than we usually suspect; for example, "On Walking Tours," "Talks and Talkers," "Crabbed Age and Youth," "An Apology for Idlers," "Truth of Intercourse," "On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places."

of Painting," "The Free Admission," "Sitting for One's Picture," "The Sick Chamber," "The Letter Bell," "The Fight." These last essays are Hazlitt at his best. They form his criticism of life and of life at its fullest — not morbid, cynical, or pessimistic. Unlike Swift, he liked man, and took a pleasure in ridiculing the everyday foibles of men. He was most fond of quoting the splendid line from Shakspeare, "Our life is of mingled yarn, good and ill together." What he liked were the things of good report. If he was bitter toward the world, these essays do not show his bitterness; if he hated men, it was because of supposed injustice, deception, hypocrisy, or oppression. His essays express vividly the philosophy of the everyday life, hinting now and then at the mystery which stands just at our elbows, detecting the peccadillos that beset mankind, analyzing with clever observation the motives of the commonplace, and adorning the apparently trivial with poetic imagination.

As a critic of men, we think of Hazlitt along with Swift and Thackeray. He was not so great as either in the depth of insight or the vigor of expression, but, like them, he was never insipid and as deeply hated sham and snobbery. The summary of Professor Winchester is so admirable that we quote a long passage: "We see in his essays an intellect disciplined and broadened by long thought, enriched by the best reading and by early and intimate acquaintance with two or three of the ablest men of that generation; a vivid imagination and a quick eye for beauty; a temper flashing into anger at opposition or softened to melancholy by failure, yet constant to the ideals of youth; a vein of perversity which always liked the back side of a truth and the underside of a quarrel, and a gift of phrase ranging from caustic epigram to lofty eloquence. And in his egotism there is no Byronic posing nor any braggart quality; it is frank, naïve, almost unconscious."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C. T. Winchester, "A Group of English Essayists," p. 67.

## VI. HAZLITT'S STYLE

As a bit of advice to writers Stevenson once said, "I should like them to read Hazlitt, there's a lot of style in Hazlitt."<sup>1</sup> One of the first impressions of his writing is his ease. He does not hesitate for a word. His friends often spoke of his preparedness, as he seemed to them always to have thought out beforehand just what he wished to say. Once the keynote was struck, he went straight to the point. What labor it implied to have acquired this habit he once described: "Oh, how little do they know who have never done anything but repeat after others by rote, the labor, the yearnings and misgivings of mind it costs to get the germ of an original idea, to dig it out of the hidden recesses of thought and nature and to bring it half-ashamed, struggling, and deformed into the day — to give words and intelligible symbols to that which was never imagined or expressed before." At first this ease and facility were slow in coming. As a boy he despaired of ever having the ability to speak and to write easily and effectively.<sup>2</sup> His reading of Burke's "Letter to a Noble Lord" first revealed to him the power of expression. From that day it thrived, but beset with great difficulty and discouragement. Thenceforth it grew and became the source of envy to his contemporaries.<sup>3</sup> He described this growing power: "When I first began to write for the newspapers, I had not till then been in the habit of writing at all, or had been a long time about it; but I perceived that with the necessity, the fluency came. Something I did took, and I was called upon to do a number of things all at once. I was in the middle of the stream, and must sink or swim."<sup>4</sup> He wrote well of countless subjects.

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Hammerton, "Stevensoniana," 1903, pp. 182-184.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. xviii.

<sup>3</sup> "Application to Study," Works, VII; "Indian Jugglers," "On Familiar Style," "On Genius and Common Sense," "On the Pleasure of Painting," Works, VI; "Writing and Speaking," Works, VI.

<sup>4</sup> "Northcote's Conversations," Works, VI, 253.

Now there were "purple patches," again his style became chaste and reserved, beautiful and picturesque, always interesting. He wrote of what he liked and in the way he liked, and so with enthusiasm, but never with insipidity. Perhaps he was illogical and prejudiced, but he was never willfully untruthful or dishonest. He always treated his reader fairly and never deigned to resort to tricks or sophistry. He abhorred the sham in diction. "I hate anything that occupies more space than it is worthy. I hate to see a load of bandboxes go along the street, and I hate to see a parcel of big words without anything in them." No one was a greater stickler for pure speech. "I do not say I would not use any phrase that had been brought into fashion before the middle or end of the last century, but I should be shy of using any that had not been employed by any approved author during the whole of that period."<sup>1</sup> Unlike Carlyle he coined no German-English hybrids; unlike De Quincey, he refused to be tempted by slang, and no one would deny to his diction either clearness or simplicity on the one hand, or beauty and picturesqueness on the other. Where is the writer of English who can better show how the pure English word can be welded into an effective tool? Hazlitt was fond of the apt phrase, and once it was conceived he used it again and again, but not with the pedantic effect which often characterized Arnold at his best. Because it pleased him, Hazlitt was content. He adorned his style with striking figures, but seldom used a more formal figure than the simile, metaphor, or contrast. The majestic apostrophe of De Quincey, or the elaborate personification of Carlyle, would ill have become the informal, personal style of Hazlitt. His was the master hand in the skill of compressing into a single phrase the character of a man or a work of literature. "Mrs. Montague's conversation is as fine cut as her features, and I like to sit in the room with that sort of coronet face. What she says leaves a flavour like green tea. Hunt's is like champagne and Northcote's like anchovy

<sup>1</sup> "On Familiar Style," p. 159.

sandwiches, Haydon's is like a game of trapball, Lamb's like snapdragon, and my own is not very much unlike a game of ninepins." His pages sparkle with a thousand things that we should like to have thought of. He admired La Rochefoucauld and wrote a number of excellent maxims. To systematic thinking he was not well suited. The phrase and sentence rather than the paragraph were his norm.

He had a wealth of illustration in the form of allusion to scores of favorite books or plays, to oft-remembered incidents of his early life, or timely anecdotes which he recalled. They were not whimsical like Lamb's, or colloquial like Hunt's, or suggestive of mystery like De Quincey's, but he never allowed an allusion to draw the reader from the theme in hand. His habit of repeated quotation has caused irritation to many a reader, who felt it a sacrilege to dissociate a line of Shakspeare from its lofty context, but he sought justification in the manner in which he made the quotation convey his own idea.

One characteristic marks his style more than another ; it was his use of the parallel construction. He liked to join his subjects in pairs ; for example, cant and hypocrisy, past and future, wit and humor, thought and action, genius and common sense, patronage and puffing, writing and speaking, and so on *ad infinitum*. So his favorite manner of elucidating his theme was by contrast ; for example, Wilkie and Hogarth, Shakspeare and Jonson, Chaucer and Spenser, Voltaire and Swift, Thomson and Cowper, Addison and Steele, Gray and Collins, Dryden and Pope. In this he had great influence on Macaulay, the master of contrast. He also has had a subtle influence upon modern criticism, which has often used this means of defining the relative importance of English writers. Thus the style of Hazlitt matured into a medium which has not been surpassed for clearness since the days of Swift, and for eloquence has been rarely equaled since the days of Sir Thomas Browne and Jeremy Taylor.

The model of Hazlitt's style was Burke, the herald of nineteenth-century prose. The fervor of Burke was transferred in Hazlitt into personal enthusiasm; the clear, intellectual prose of the best eighteenth-century writers developed in Hazlitt a style simple, pointed, and epigrammatic. Since Swift, Burke's was the best prose style, Hazlitt's the best essay style. The possibilities of prose Burke never foresaw — the wit of Sydney Smith, the elegance of De Quincey, the whimsicality of Lamb, the spiritual vigor of Carlyle, the splendid, architectural, symmetry of Macaulay.

In the first half of the nineteenth century Macaulay was directly indebted to Hazlitt. Between these two men there is a kinship which the casual reader may not at first distinguish. In both we observe the prominence of the parallel construction — the same tendency toward epigrammatic expression, the same underlying determination to write with unmistakable clearness. In the second half of the century Newman's writing bore ample testimony to the romantic mood of which it was so evident Hazlitt was a contemporary exponent. However, if to any one the mantle of the prophet was handed down, it was to Stevenson. In spirit they were alike, — in enthusiasm, in the joy of writing and the joy of living, — and Stevenson was ever ready to acknowledge his allegiance to the master sentimentalist. Among recent critics Hazlitt has found a goodly band of admirers — Thackeray, Leslie Stephen, Stevenson, Walter Bagehot, Professor Saintsbury, Mr. Birrell, and Professor Winchester.

## VII. THE MAN HAZLITT

Hazlitt's writings were a distinct reflection of his opinions, prejudices, and memories. He liked to think and write about "abstract propositions" which, as he once said, "were the last thing he would give up." As a boy at Hackney he tried to define his conception of ethics and politics. He wrote of time,

birth, immortality, but he could not give them that element of mystery which made the work of De Quincey of such rhetorical elegance. He did not possess Carlyle's power of giving to them the spiritual import which he derived from a greater insight into the forces of history and life. To Hazlitt everything became personal and reminiscent. He brought everything down to that ; time was mysterious because the past had so many delightful memories ; death was not to be feared because he knew nothing of what we were before we were born, therefore what should he fear of the future. Every phase of ethics and politics in Hazlitt's mind was personified by some one whom he admired or hated.

To his contemporaries Hazlitt was a man of bad temper. Even Lamb, in his note of congratulation<sup>1</sup> on the birth of the young William Hazlitt, hoped that the new child would have a better temper than his father. He had pleasure in hating, and with gusto wrote an essay on the subject. He hated all kinds of cant and hypocrisy,<sup>2</sup> not because he was driven by a moral conviction like Carlyle, but rather because he was led by feelings which gave him pleasure. His attitude toward a writer or politician was not modified by the fact that the man was living and much admired. Above everything he loved freedom and truth, and stood up for them. "Mental courage is the only courage I pretend to. . . . In little else I have the spirit of martyrdom, but I would rather give up anything rather than an abstract proposition." "If any one wishes to see me quite calm, they may cheat me in a bargain or tread upon my toes, but a truth repelled or a sophism repeated totally disconcerts me, and I lose all patience. I am not, in the ordinary acceptance of the term, a good-natured man ; that is, many things annoy me besides what interferes with my own ease and interest. I hate a lie ; a piece of injustice wounds me to the quick, though nothing but

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. xxv.

<sup>2</sup> "On Cant and Hypocrisy," "On Depth and Superficiality," "Ignorance of the Learned," etc.

the report of it reaches me. Therefore I have made many enemies and few friends.”<sup>1</sup> And it must be admitted that he never concealed anything. The virulent Gifford or the sneering *Blackwood* reviewer were possessed of all the facts, and nothing has been revealed since that time to make him the less esteemed. In the drama, in painting, in literature, he defended rising men, or those for whom he had a sincere regard, and it is surprising that most of his judgments are to-day part and parcel of our accepted criticism. Born of dissenting parents, he carried on the torch of liberalism in thinking. He allied himself with no church, occupied himself little with religious questions, hated the Whigs<sup>2</sup> because they had not the courage of their convictions, and the Tories because they<sup>3</sup> were the foes of popular liberty. He hated all royalty,<sup>8</sup> and had little faith in the people.<sup>4</sup> “The public have neither shame nor gratitude.”<sup>5</sup> By temperament he was shy and awkward, and felt great embarrassment in the presence of women.<sup>6</sup> He always felt that people were staring at him or saying disagreeable things about him. To one of Northcote’s remarks he says: “What you have stated is the best excuse I could make for my own faults or blunders. When one is found fault with for nothing, or for doing one’s best, one is apt to give the world their revenge. All the former part of my life I was treated as a cipher, and since I have got into notice I have been set upon as a wild beast. When this is the case, and you can expect as little justice as candor, you naturally in self-defense take refuge in a sort of misanthropy and cynical contempt for mankind. One is disposed to humour them

<sup>1</sup> “On Depth and Superficiality,” Works, VII, 347.

<sup>2</sup> “Political Essays,” Works, III, preface, pp. 31 f.

<sup>3</sup> “On Great and Little Things,” Works, VI, 276.

<sup>4</sup> “On Living to One’s-Self.” “Hazlitt, who boldly says all he feels, avows that not only he does not pity sick people but he hates them.” See Lamb’s letter to B. Barton, April, 1824.

<sup>5</sup> “Characteristics,” II, No. LXXXV, p. 369.

<sup>6</sup> Lamb’s letter to Wordsworth, June 6, 1806; references in Crabb Robinson’s Diary.

and to furnish them with some ground for their idle and malevolent censures.”<sup>1</sup>

There is nothing very admirable in Hazlitt's relation to his friends. Ill humor may be made the excuse of many of his acts, but it is difficult for us to excuse his harsh treatment of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and even Lamb, who fortunately understood him better and, thanks to the nobility of his character and his capacity for friendship, appreciated the sterling worth of the man and never forsook him.<sup>2</sup> Hazlitt, after a congenial acquaintance had been made, imagined an offense or looked upon his friend as the exponent of some narrow prejudice, and then drew apart. With something of brutal frankness he once wrote: "I have quarreled with almost all my old friends. Most of the friends I have seen have turned out the bitterest enemies, or cold, uncomfortable acquaintances. Old companions are like meats served up too often, that lose their relish and wholesomeness."<sup>3</sup> With almost all the men worth knowing in London during the years 1805-1810 Hazlitt had been on terms of intimacy, but no one except Charles Lamb remained to him in his later years.

Yet despite all this prejudice and passionate ill humor, the man had his fine side. What he liked he liked with joyful enthusiasm. The most delightful passages in his books are those in which he records the first time that he read a book or saw a picture or a great actor. He thrilled with joy in recalling his first reading of Rousseau's "New Heloise," of "Paul and Virginia" at an inn in Bridgewater or in Tewksbury, "Tom Jones," Burke's "Letter to a Noble Lord," "Gil Blas," "Don Quixote," and a dozen more of his favorites. He never forgot his first nights at the theater, when he was enraptured by Kean, Kemble, or Mrs. Siddons. These red-letter days made him happy. On the day

<sup>1</sup> "Northcote's Conversations," Works, VI, 270.

<sup>2</sup> "Spirit of Obligations," Works, VII, 78 ff.

<sup>3</sup> "On Living to One's-Self," p. 134.

which brought news of the battle of Austerlitz, he wrote, "I walked out in the afternoon, and as I returned saw the evening star set over a poor man's cottage with other thoughts and feelings than I shall ever have again."<sup>1</sup> On another day: "I remember being once drawn by a shower of rain for shelter into a picture dealer's shop in Oxford Street, where there stood on the floor a copy of Gainsborough's Shepherd Boy with a thunderstorm coming on. What a truth and beauty was there! He stands with his hands clasped, looking up with a mixture of timidity and resignation, eying a magpie chattering over his head, while the wind is rustling in the branches. It was like a vision breathed on the canvas. I have been fond of Gainsborough ever since."<sup>2</sup> The description of his first meeting with Coleridge and Wordsworth, Professor Winchester has called "the most delightful essay of personal reminiscence in the English language." Like Lamb he loved the past.<sup>3</sup> Like him, too, he loved old books and old scenes. "For myself I should like to browse on folios and have to do chiefly with authors that I have scarcely strength to lift, that are as solid as they are heavy, and if dull are full of matter."<sup>4</sup> He liked to write for the sake of writing, he liked painting, he liked good talk; among the actors, poets, and painters he liked the best. His enjoyment of walking has found well-nigh perfect expression in one of his most delightful essays. These are his pleasures, and where could there be better? "There are only three pleasures in life," he writes, "pure and lasting and all derived from inanimate things—books, pictures, and the face of nature."<sup>5</sup> "Food, warmth, sleep, and a book; these are all I at present ask—the ultima Thule of my wandering desires."

<sup>1</sup> "On the Pleasure of Painting," p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> "Conversations of Northcote," Works, Vol. VI.

<sup>3</sup> One of his best essays bears the title "On the Past and Future," Works, VI, 21; see also the "New School of Reform," Works, VII, 179 ff.

<sup>4</sup> "Memoirs," II, 297. See also "On Reading Old Books" and "On Reading New Books."

<sup>5</sup> "Picture Galleries in England," Works, Vol. IX.

He insisted that a man should be himself and not try to be somebody else. "Nothing remarkable was ever done except by following up the impulse of our own minds, by grappling with difficulties and improving our advantages, not by dreaming over our own premature triumphs or doating on the achievements of others."<sup>1</sup> "No one has a right to steal who is not rich enough to be robbed by others."<sup>2</sup> In his brilliant essay, "On Ignorance of the Learned," he held up to scorn the stupid ignorance of those who pretend to knowledge got chiefly from books.<sup>3</sup> "I never felt myself superior to any one who did not go out of his way to affect qualities which he had not."<sup>4</sup> "I myself have no such feeling nor the least ambition to shine except by doing something better than others."

As we close the review of Hazlitt, the man and writer, we should heed one of his remarks, "A man's life is his whole life, not the last glimmering snuff of the candle, and this, I say, is considerable and not a little matter, whether we regard its pleasures or its pains." He was a man of varied attainments and he did his work well. If he has not left a monumental piece, he adorned whatever he touched, and cleared a path for other great writers who could follow him in work practically untried before him. He is always interesting and will long be read by those who like work well done and with spirit. His work was finished and he might well say with his last breath, looking over the joyful moments of his half century, "Well, I've had a happy life."

<sup>1</sup> "English Students at Rome," Works, IX, 371.

<sup>2</sup> "On Originality," Works, IX, 423.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Stevenson's essay, "Apology for Idlers."

<sup>4</sup> "Characteristics after the Manner of La Rochefoucauld," Works, Vol. II.

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# SELECTIONS FROM HAZLITT

## HAMLET

This is that Hamlet the Dane, whom we read of in our youth, and whom we may be said almost to remember in our after-years; he who made that famous soliloquy on life, who gave the advice to the players, who thought "this goodly frame, the earth, a sterile promontory, and this brave o'er-hanging firmament, the air, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire, a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours;" whom "man delighted not, nor woman neither;" he who talked with the grave-diggers, and moralised on Yorick's skull; the school-fellow of Rosencrans and Guildenstern at Wittenberg; the friend of Horatio; the lover of Ophelia; he that was mad and sent to England; the slow avenger of his father's death; who lived at the court of Horwendillus five hundred years before we were born, but all whose thoughts we seem to know as well as we do our own, because we have read them in Shakespear. 15

Hamlet is a name; his speeches and sayings but the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What then, are they not real? They are as real as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind. It is *we* who are Hamlet. This play has a prophetic truth, which is above that of history. Whoever has become thoughtful and melancholy through his own mishaps or those of others; whoever has borne about with him the clouded brow of reflection, and thought himself "too much i' th' sun;" whoever has seen the golden lamp of day dimmed by envious mists rising in his own breast, and could find in the world before 25

him only a dull blank with nothing left remarkable in it; whoever has known "the pangs of despised love, the insolence of office, or the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes;" he who has felt his mind sink within him, and sadness cling to his heart like a malady, who has had his hopes blighted and his youth staggered by the apparitions of strange things; who cannot be well at ease, while he sees evil hovering near him like a spectre; whose powers of action have been eaten up by thought, he to whom the universe seems infinite, and himself nothing; whose bitterness of soul makes him careless of consequences, and who goes to a play as his best resource to shove off, to a second remove, the evils of life by a mock representation of them — this is the true Hamlet.

We have been so used to this tragedy that we hardly know how to criticise it any more than we should know how to describe our own faces. But we must make such observations as we can. It is the one of Shakespeare's plays that we think of the oftenest, because it abounds most in striking reflections on human life, and because the distresses of Hamlet are transferred, by the turn of his mind, to the general account of humanity. Whatever happens to him we apply to ourselves, because he applies it so himself as a means of general reasoning. He is a great moraliser; and what makes him worth attending to is, that he moralises on his own feelings and experience. He is not a common-place pedant. If *LEAR* shews the greatest depth of passion, *HAMLET* is the most remarkable for the ingenuity, originality, and unstudied development of character. Shakespeare had more magnanimity than any other poet, and he has shewn more of it in this play than in any other. There is no attempt to force an interest: everything is left for time and circumstances to unfold. The attention is excited without effort, the incidents succeed each other as matters of course, the characters think and speak and act just as they might do, if left entirely to themselves. There is no set purpose, no straining at a point. The

observations are suggested by the passing scene — the gusts of passion come and go like sounds of music borne on the wind. The whole play is an exact transcript of what might be supposed to have taken place at the court of Denmark, at the remote period of time fixed upon, before the modern refinements in morals 5 and manners were heard of. It would have been interesting enough to have been admitted as a by-stander in such a scene, at such a time, to have heard and seen something of what was going on. But here we are more than spectators. We have not only "the outward pageants and the signs of grief;" but "we 10 have that within which passes shew." We read the thoughts of the heart, we catch the passions living as they rise. Other dramatic writers give us very fine versions and paraphrases of nature: but Shakespear, together with his own comments, gives us the original text, that we may judge for ourselves. This is a 15 very great advantage.

The character of Hamlet is itself a pure effusion of genius. It is not a character marked by strength of will or even of passion, but by refinement of thought and sentiment. Hamlet is as little of the hero as a man can well be: but he is a young 20 and princely novice, full of high enthusiasm and quick sensibility — the sport of circumstances, questioning with fortune and refining on his own feelings, and forced from the natural bias of his disposition by the strangeness of his situation. He seems incapable of deliberate action, and is only hurried into extrem- 25 ities on the spur of the occasion, when he has no time to reflect, as in the scene where he kills Polonius, and again, where he alters the letters which Rosencrans and Guildenstern are taking with them to England, purporting his death. At other times, when he is most bound to act, he remains puzzled, undecided, 30 and sceptical, dallies with his purposes, till the occasion is lost, and always finds some pretence to relapse into indolence and thoughtfulness again. For this reason he refuses to kill the King when he is at his prayers, and by a refinement in malice,

which is in truth only an excuse for his own want of resolution, defers his revenge to some more fatal opportunity, when he shall be engaged in some act "that has no relish of salvation in it."

" He kneels and prays,  
 5       And now I'll do 't, and so he goes to heaven,  
       And so am I reveng'd: *that would be scann'd.*  
       He kill'd my father, and for that,  
       I, his sole son, send him to heaven.  
       Why this is reward, not revenge.  
 10       Up sword and know thou a more horrid time,  
       When he is drunk, asleep, or in a rage."

He is the prince of philosophical speculators, and because he cannot have his revenge perfect, according to the most refined idea his wish can form, he misses it altogether. So he scruples  
 15 to trust the suggestions of the Ghost, contrives the scene of the play to have surer proof of his uncle's guilt, and then rests satisfied with this confirmation of his suspicions, and the success of his experiment, instead of acting upon it. Yet he is sensible of his own weakness, taxes himself with it, and tries to reason  
 20 himself out of it.

" How all occasions do inform against me,  
       And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,  
       If his chief good and market of his time  
       Be but to sleep and feed? A beast; no more.  
 25       Sure he that made us with such large discourse,  
       Looking before and after, gave us not  
       That capability and god-like reason  
       To rust in us unus'd: now whether it be  
       Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple  
 30       Of thinking too precisely on th' event, —  
       A thought which quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom,  
       And ever three parts coward; — I do not know  
       Why yet I live to say, this thing's to do;  
       Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means  
 35       To do it. Examples gross as earth excite me:  
       Witness this army of such mass and charge,  
       Led by a delicate and tender prince,  
       Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd,

Makes mouths at the invisible event,  
 Exposing what is mortal and unsure  
 To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,  
 Even for an egg-shell. 'Tis not to be great,  
 Never to stir without great argument; 5  
 But greatly to find quarrel in a straw,  
 When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,  
 That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,  
 Excitements of my reason and my blood,  
 And let all sleep, while to my shame I see 10  
 The imminent death of twenty thousand men,  
 That for a fantasy and trick of fame,  
 Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot  
 Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,  
 Which is not tomb enough and continent 15  
 To hide the slain? — O, from this time forth,  
 My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth."

Still he does nothing; and this very speculation on his own infirmity only affords him another occasion for indulging it. It is not for any want of attachment to his father or abhorrence of 20 his murder that Hamlet is thus dilatory, but it is more to his taste to indulge his imagination in reflecting upon the enormity of the crime and refining on his schemes of vengeance, than to put them into immediate practice. His ruling passion is to think, not to act: and any vague pretence that flatters this propensity 25 instantly diverts him from his previous purposes.

The moral perfection of this character has been called in question, we think, by those who did not understand it. It is more interesting than according to rules: amiable, though not faultless. The ethical delineations of "that noble and liberal casuist" (as 30 Shakespear has been well called) do not exhibit the drab-coloured quakerism of morality. His plays are not copied either from the Whole Duty of Man or from The Academy of Compliments! We confess, we are a little shocked at the want of refinement in those who are shocked at the want of refinement in Hamlet. 35 The want of punctilious exactness in his behaviour either partakes of the "licence of the time," or else belongs to the very

excess of intellectual refinement in the character, which makes the common rules of life, as well as his own purposes, sit loose upon him. He may be said to be amenable only to the tribunal of his own thoughts, and is too much taken up with the airy world of contemplation to lay as much stress as he ought on the practical consequences of things. His habitual principles of action are unhinged and out of joint with the time. His conduct to Ophelia is quite natural in his circumstances. It is that of assumed severity only. It is the effect of disappointed hope, of bitter regrets, of affection suspended, not obliterated, by the distractions of the scene around him! Amidst the natural and preternatural horrors of his situation, he might be excused in delicacy from carrying on a regular courtship. When "his father's spirit was in arms," it was not a time for the son to make love in. He could neither marry Ophelia, nor wound her mind by explaining the cause of his alienation, which he durst hardly trust himself to think of. It would have taken him years to have come to a direct explanation on the point. In the harassed state of his mind, he could not have done otherwise than he did. His conduct does not contradict what he says when he sees her funeral,

"I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers  
Could not with all their quantity of love  
Make up my sum."

Nothing can be more affecting or beautiful than the Queen's apostrophe to Ophelia on throwing the flowers into the grave.

"Sweets to the sweet, farewell.  
I hop'd thou should'st have been my Hamlet's wife:  
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,  
And not have strew'd thy grave."

Shakespear was thoroughly a master of the mixed motives of human character, and he here shews us the Queen, who was so criminal in some respects, not without sensibility and affection in other relations of life. — Ophelia is a character almost too exquisitely touching to be dwelt upon. Oh rose of May, oh

flower too soon faded ! Her love, her madness, her death, are described with the truest touches of tenderness and pathos. It is a character which nobody but Shakespear could have drawn in the way that he has done, and to the conception of which there is not even the smallest approach, except in some of the 5 old romantic ballads.<sup>1</sup> Her brother, Laertes, is a character we do not like so well : he is too hot and choleric, and somewhat rhodomontade. Polonius is a perfect character in its kind ; nor is there any foundation for the objections which have been made to the consistency of this part. It is said that he acts 10 very foolishly and talks very sensibly. There is no inconsistency in that. Again, that he talks wisely at one time and foolishly at another ; that his advice to Laertes is very sensible, and his advice to the King and Queen on the subject of Hamlet's madness very ridiculous. But he gives the one as a father, 15 and is sincere in it ; he gives the other as a mere courtier, a busy-body, and is accordingly officious, garrulous, and impertinent. In short, Shakespear has been accused of inconsistency in this and other characters, only because he has kept up the distinction which there is in nature, between the understand- 20 ings and the moral habits of men, between the absurdity of their ideas and the absurdity of their motives. Polonius is not a fool, but he makes himself so. His folly, whether in his actions or speeches, comes under the head of impropriety of intention.

We do not like to see our author's plays acted, and least of 25 all, HAMLET. There is no play that suffers so much in being transferred to the stage. Hamlet himself seems hardly capable of being acted. Mr. Kemble unavoidably fails in this character from a want of ease and variety. The character of Hamlet is

<sup>1</sup> In the account of her death, a friend has pointed out an instance of the poet's exact observation of nature :—

"There is a willow growing o'er a brook,  
That shows its hoary leaves i' th' glassy stream."

The inside of the leaves of the willow, next the water, is of a whitish colour, and the reflection would therefore be "hoary."

made up of undulating lines; it has the yielding flexibility of "a wave o' th' sea." Mr. Kemble plays it like a man in armour, with a determined inveteracy of purpose, in one undeviating straight line, which is as remote from the natural grace and refined susceptibility of the character, as the sharp angles and abrupt starts which Mr. Kean introduces into the part. Mr. Kean's Hamlet is as much too splenetic and rash as Mr. Kemble's is too deliberate and formal. His manner is too strong and pointed. He throws a severity, approaching to virulence, into the common observations and answers. There is nothing of this in Hamlet. He is, as it were, wrapped up in his reflections, and only *thinks aloud*. There should therefore be no attempt to impress what he says upon others by a studied exaggeration of emphasis or manner; no *talking at* his hearers. There should be as much of the gentleman and scholar as possible infused into the part, and as little of the actor. A pensive air of sadness should sit reluctantly upon his brow, but no appearance of fixed and sullen gloom. He is full of weakness and melancholy, but there is no harshness in his nature. He is the most amiable of misanthropes.

## ON THE PERIODICAL ESSAYISTS

"The proper study of mankind is man."

I now come to speak of that sort of writing which has been so successfully cultivated in this country by our periodical Essayists, and which consists in applying the talents and resources of the mind to all that mixed mass of human affairs, which, though not included under the head of any regular art, science, or profession, falls under the cognizance of the writer, and "comes home to the business and bosoms of men." *Quicquid agunt homines nostri farrago libelli*, is the general motto of this department of literature. It does not treat of minerals or fossils, of the virtues of plants, or the influence of planets; it does not meddle with forms of belief, or systems of philosophy, nor launch into the world of spiritual existences; but it makes familiar with the world of men and women, records their actions, assigns their motives, exhibits their whims, characterises their pursuits in all their singular and endless variety, ridicules their absurdities, exposes their inconsistencies, "holds the mirror up to nature, and shews the very age and body of the time its form and pressure;" takes minutes of our dress, air, looks, words, thoughts, and actions; shews us what we are, and what we are not; plays the whole game of human life over before us, and by making us enlightened spectators of its many-coloured scenes, enables us (if possible) to become tolerably reasonable agents in the one in which we have to perform a part. "The act and practic part of life is thus made the mistress of our theorique." It is the best and most natural course of study. It is in morals and manners what the experimental is in natural philosophy, as opposed to the dogmatical method. It does not

deal in sweeping clauses of proscription and anathema, but in nice distinction and liberal constructions. It makes up its general accounts from details, its few theories from many facts. It does not try to prove all black or all white as it wishes, but lays on  
5 the intermediate colours, (and most of them not unpleasing ones,) as it finds them blended with "the web of our life, which is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." It inquires what human life is and has been, to shew what it ought to be. It follows it into courts and camps, into town and country, into  
10 rustic sports or learned disputations, into the various shades of prejudice or ignorance, of refinement or barbarism, into its private haunts or public pageants, into its weaknesses and littlenesses, its professions and its practices — before it pretends to distinguish right from wrong, or one thing from another. How,  
15 indeed, should it do so otherwise?

*"Quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,  
Plenius et melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit."*

The writers I speak of are, if not moral philosophers, moral historians, and that 's better : or if they are both, they found the one  
20 character upon the other ; their premises precede their conclusions; and we put faith in their testimony, for we know that it is true.

Montaigne was the first person who in his Essays led the way to this kind of writing among the moderns. The great merit of Montaigne then was, that he may be said to have been the first  
25 who had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man. And as courage is generally the effect of conscious strength, he was probably led to do so by the richness, truth, and force of his own observations on books and men. He was, in the truest sense, a man of original mind, that is, he had the power of  
30 looking at things for himself, or as they really were, instead of blindly trusting to, and fondly repeating what others told him that they were. He got rid of the go-cart of prejudice and affectation, with the learned lumber that follows at their heels, because he could do without them. In taking up his pen he did

not set up for a philosopher, wit, orator, or moralist, but he became all these by merely daring to tell us whatever passed through his mind, in its naked simplicity and force, that he thought any ways worth communicating. He did not, in the abstract character of an author, undertake to say all that could 5 be said upon a subject, but what in his capacity as an inquirer after truth he happened to know about it. He was neither a pedant nor a bigot. He neither supposed that he was bound to know all things, nor that all things were bound to conform to what he had fancied or would have them to be. In treating of 10 men and manners, he spoke of them as he found them, not according to preconceived notions and abstract dogmas; and he began by teaching us what he himself was. In criticising books he did not compare them with rules and systems, but told us what he saw to like or dislike in them. He did not take his 15 standard of excellence "according to an exact scale" of Aristotle, or fall out with a work that was good for anything, because "not one of the angles at the four corners was a right one." He was, in a word, the first author who was not a bookmaker, and who wrote not to make converts of others to established 20 creeds and prejudices, but to satisfy his own mind of the truth of things. In this respect we know not which to be most charmed with, the author or the man. There is an inexpressible frankness and sincerity, as well as power, in what he writes. There is no attempt at imposition or concealment, no juggling 25 tricks or solemn mouthing, no laboured attempts at proving himself always in the right, and everybody else in the wrong; he says what is uppermost, lays open what floats at the top or the bottom of his mind, and deserves Pope's character of him, where he professes to 30

" — pour out all as plain  
As downright Shippen, or as old Montaigne." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Why Pope should say in reference to him, "*Or more wise Charron*," is not easy to determine.

He does not converse with us like a pedagogue with his pupil, whom he wishes to make as great a blockhead as himself, but like a philosopher and friend who has passed through life with thought and observation, and is willing to enable others to pass  
 5 through it with pleasure and profit. A writer of this stamp, I confess, appears to me as much superior to a common book-worm, as a library of real books is superior to a mere book-case, painted and lettered on the outside with the names of celebrated works. As he was the first to attempt this new way  
 10 of writing, so the same strong natural impulse which prompted the undertaking, carried him to the end of his career. The same force and honesty of mind which urged him to throw off the shackles of custom and prejudice, would enable him to complete his triumph over them. He has left little for his successors to  
 15 achieve in the way of just and original speculation on human life. Nearly all the thinking of the two last centuries of that kind which the French denominate *morale observatrice*, is to be found in Montaigne's Essays: there is the germ, at least, and generally much more. He sowed the seed and cleared away the  
 20 rubbish, even where others have reaped the fruit, or cultivated and decorated the soil to a greater degree of nicety and perfection. There is no one to whom the old Latin adage is more applicable than to Montaigne, "*Pereant isti qui ante nos nostra dixerunt.*" There has been no new impulse given to thought  
 25 since his time. Among the specimens of criticisms on authors which he has left us, are those on Virgil, Ovid, and Boccaccio, in the account of books which he thinks worth reading, or (which is the same thing) which he finds he can read in his old age, and which may be reckoned among the few criticisms which are  
 30 worth reading at any age.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As an instance of his general power of reasoning, I shall give his chapter entitled *One Man's Profit is another's Loss*, in which he has nearly anticipated Mandeville's celebrated paradox of private vices being public benefits:—

Demades, the Athenian, condemned a fellow-citizen, who furnished out funerals, for demanding too great a price for his goods: and if he got an estate, it must be by the

Montaigne's Essays were translated into English by Charles Cotton, who was one of the wits and poets of the age of Charles II. ; and Lord Halifax, one of the noble critics of that day, declared it to be "the book in the world he was the best pleased with." This mode of familiar Essay-writing, free from the trammels of the schools, and the airs of professed authorship, was successfully imitated, about the same time, by Cowley and Sir William Temple, in their miscellaneous Essays, which are very agreeable and learned talking upon paper. Lord Shaftesbury, on the contrary, who aimed at the same easy, *degagé* mode of communicating his thoughts to the world, has quite spoiled his matter, which is sometimes valuable, by his manner, in which he carries a certain flaunting, flowery, figurative, flirting style of amicable condescension to the reader, to an excess more tantalising than the most starched and ridiculous formality of the age of James I. There is nothing so tormenting as the affectation of ease and freedom from affectation.

The ice being thus thawed, and the barrier that kept authors at a distance from common sense and feeling broken through, the transition was not difficult from Montaigne and his imitators to our Periodical Essayists. These last applied the same unrestrained expression of their thoughts to the more immediate and

death of a great many people : but I think it a sentence ill grounded, forasmuch as no profit can be made, but at the expense of some other person, and that every kind of gain is by that rule liable to be condemned. The tradesman thrives by the debauchery of youth, and the farmer by the dearth of corn ; the architect by the ruin of buildings, the officers of justice by quarrels and law-suits ; nay, even the honour and function of divines is owing to our mortality and vices. No physician takes pleasure in the health even of his best friends, said the ancient Greek comedian, nor soldier in the peace of his country ; and so of the rest. And, what is yet worse, let every one but examine his own heart, and he will find, that his private wishes spring and grow up at the expense of some other person. Upon which consideration this thought came into my head, that nature does not hereby deviate from her general policy ; for the naturalists hold, that the birth, nourishment, and increase of any one thing is the decay and corruption of another :

*"Nam quodcunque suis mutatum finibus exit,  
Continuo hoc mors est illius, quod fuit ante. i. e.*

For what from its own confines chang'd doth pass,  
Is straight the death of what before it was."

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passing scenes of life, to temporary and local matters; and in order to discharge the invidious office of *Censor Morum* more freely, and with less responsibility, assumed some fictitious and humorous disguise, which, however, in a great degree corresponded to their own peculiar habits and character. By thus concealing their own name and person under the title of the Tatler, Spectator, &c., they were enabled to inform us more fully of what was passing in the world, while the dramatic contrast and ironical point of view to which the whole is subjected, added a greater liveliness and *piquancy* to the descriptions. The philosopher and wit here commences newsmonger, makes himself master of "the perfect spy o' th' time," and from his various walks and turns through life, brings home little curious specimens of the humours, opinions, and manners of his contemporaries, as the botanist brings home different plants and weeds, or the mineralogist different shells and fossils, to illustrate their several theories, and be useful to mankind.

The first of these papers that was attempted in this country was set up by Steele in the beginning of the last century; and of all our periodical Essayists, the Tatler (for that was the name he assumed) has always appeared to me the most amusing and agreeable. Montaigne, whom I have proposed to consider as the father of this kind of personal authorship among the moderns, in which the reader is admitted behind the curtain, and sits down with the writer in his gown and slippers, was a most magnanimous and undisguised egotist; but Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. was the more disinterested gossip of the two. The French author is contented to describe the peculiarities of his own mind and constitution, which he does with a copious and unsparing hand. The English journalist good-naturedly lets you into the secret both of his own affairs and those of others. A young lady, on the other side Temple Bar, cannot be seen at her glass for half a day together, but Mr. Bickerstaff takes due notice of it; and he has the first intelligence of the symptoms of the *belle* passion

appearing in any young gentleman at the West-end of the town. The departures and arrivals of widows with handsome jointures, either to bury their grief in the country, or to procure a second husband in town, are punctually recorded in his pages. He is well acquainted with the celebrated beauties of the preceding age 5 at the court of Charles II.; and the old gentleman (as he feigns himself) often grows romantic in recounting "the disastrous strokes which his youth suffered" from the glances of their bright eyes, and their unaccountable caprices. In particular, he dwells with a secret satisfaction on the recollection of one of his mis- 10 tresses, who left him for a richer rival, and whose constant reproach to her husband, on occasion of any quarrel between them, was "I, that might have married the famous Mr. Bickerstaff, to be treated in this manner!" The club at the Trumpet consists of a set of persons almost as well worth knowing as himself. The 15 cavalcade of the justice of the peace, the knight of the shire, the country squire, and the young gentleman, his nephew, who came to wait on him at his chambers, in such form and ceremony, seem not to have settled the order of their precedence to this hour<sup>1</sup>; and I should hope that the upholsterer and his companions, 20 who used to sun themselves in the Green Park, and who broke their rest and fortunes to maintain the balance of power in Europe, stand as fair a chance for immortality as some modern politicians. Mr. Bickerstaff himself is a gentleman and a scholar, a humorist, and a man of the world; with a great deal of nice 25 easy *naïveté* about him. If he walks out and is caught in a shower of rain, he makes amends for this unlucky accident by a criticism on the shower in Virgil, and concludes with a burlesque copy of verses on a city-shower. He entertains us, when he dates from his own apartments, with a quotation from Plutarch, 30 or a moral reflection; from the Grecian coffee-house with politics; and from Wills' or the Temple, with the poets and players, the beaux and men of wit and pleasure about town. In reading

<sup>1</sup> No. 125.

the pages of the Tatler, we seem as if suddenly carried back to the age of Queen Anne, of toupees and full-bottomed periwigs. The whole appearance of our dress and manners undergoes a delightful metamorphosis. The beaux and the belles  
5 are of a quite different species from what they are at present; we distinguish the dappers, the smarts, and the pretty fellows, as they pass by Mr. Lilly's shop-windows in the Strand; we are introduced to Betterton and Mrs. Oldfield behind the scenes; are made familiar with the persons and performances of Will  
10 Estcourt or Tom Durfey; we listen to a dispute at a tavern on the merits of the Duke of Marlborough or Marshal Turenne; or are present at the first rehearsal of a play by Vanbrugh, or the reading of a new poem by Mr. Pope. The privilege of thus virtually transporting ourselves to past times is even greater  
15 than that of visiting distant places in reality. London, a hundred years ago, would be much better worth seeing than Paris at the present moment.

It will be said, that all this is to be found, in the same or a greater degree, [in the Spectator. For myself, I do not think  
20 so; or at least, there is in the last work a much greater proportion of common-place matter. I have, on this account, always preferred the Tatler to the Spectator. Whether it is owing to my having been earlier or better acquainted with the one than the other, my pleasure in reading these two admirable works is  
25 not in proportion to their comparative reputation. The Tatler contains only half the number of volumes, and, I will venture to say, nearly an equal quantity of sterling wit and sense. "The first sprightly runnings" are there: it has more of the original spirit, more of the freshness and stamp of nature. The indica-  
30 tions of character and strokes of humour are more true and frequent; the reflections that suggest themselves arise more from the occasion, and are less spun out into regular dissertations. They are more like the remarks which occur in sensible conversation, and less like a lecture. Something is left to the

understanding of the reader. Steele seems to have gone into his closet chiefly to set down what he observed out of doors. Addison seems to have spent most of his time in his study, and to have spun out and wire-drawn the hints, which he borrowed from Steele, or took from nature, to the utmost. I am far from 5 wishing to depreciate Addison's talents, but I am anxious to do justice to Steele, who was, I think, upon the whole, a less artificial and more original writer. The humorous descriptions of Steele resemble loose sketches, or fragments of a comedy ; those of Addison are rather comments or ingenious paraphrases on the 10 genuine text. The characters of the club not only in the Tatler, but in the Spectator, were drawn by Steele. That of Sir Roger de Coverley is among the number. Addison has, however, gained himself immortal honour by his manner of filling up this last character. Who is there that can forget, or be insensible to, 15 the inimitable nameless graces and varied traits of nature and of old English character in it — to his unpretending virtues and amiable weaknesses — to his modesty, generosity, hospitality, and eccentric whims — to the respect of his neighbours, and the affection of his domestics — to his wayward, hopeless, secret 20 passion for his fair enemy, the widow, in which there is more of real romance and true delicacy, than in a thousand tales of knight-errantry — (we perceive the hectic flush of his cheek, the faltering of his tongue in speaking of her bewitching airs and "the whiteness of her hand") — to the havoc he makes 25 among the game in his neighbourhood — to his speech from the bench, to shew the Spectator what is thought of him in the country — to his unwillingness to be put up as a sign-post, and his having his own likeness turned into the Saracen's head — to his gentle reproof of the baggage of a gipsy that tells him 30 "he has a widow in his line of life" — to his doubts as to the existence of witchcraft, and protection of reputed witches — to his account of the family pictures, and his choice of a chaplain — to his falling asleep at church, and his reproof of John Williams,

as soon as he recovered from his nap, for talking in sermon-time. The characters of Will. Wimble and Will. Honeycomb are not a whit behind their friend, Sir Roger, in delicacy and felicity. The delightful simplicity and good-humoured officious-  
5 ness in the one are set off by the graceful affectation and courtly pretension in the other. How long since I first became acquainted with these two characters in the Spectator! What old-fashioned friends they seem, and yet I am not tired of them like so many other friends, nor they of me! How airy these  
10 abstractions of the poet's pen stream over the dawn of our acquaintance with human life! how they glance their fairest colours on the prospect before us! how pure they remain in it to the last, like the rainbow in the evening-cloud, which the rude hand of time and experience can neither soil nor dissipate!  
15 What a pity that we cannot find the reality, and yet if we did, the dream would be over. I once thought I knew a Will. Wimble, and a Will. Honeycomb, but they turned out but indifferently; the originals in the Spectator still read, word for word, the same that they always did. We have only to turn to the page, and find  
20 them where we left them! — Many of the most exquisite pieces in the Tatler, it is to be observed, are Addison's, as the Court of Honour, and the Personification of Musical Instruments, with almost all those papers that form regular sets or series. I do not know whether the picture of the family of an old college  
25 acquaintance, in the Tatler, where the children run to let Mr. Bickerstaff in at the door, and where the one that loses the race that way, turns back to tell the father that he is come; with the nice gradation of incredulity in the little boy, who is got into Guy of Warwick, and the Seven Champions, and who shakes his  
30 head at the improbability of Æsop's Fables, is Steele's or Addison's, though I believe it belongs to the former. The account of the two sisters, one of whom held up her head higher than ordinary, from having on a pair of flowered garters, and that of the married lady who complained to the Tatler of the neglect of

her husband, with her answers to some *home* questions that were put to her, are unquestionably Steele's. — If the Tatler is not inferior to the Spectator as a record of manners and character, it is superior to it in the interest of many of the stories. Several of the incidents related there by Steele have never been sur- 5 passed in the heart-rending pathos of private distress. I might refer to those of the lover and his mistress, when the theatre, in which they were, caught fire; of the bridegroom, who by accident kills his bride on the day of their marriage; the story of Mr. Eustace and his wife; and the fine dream about his own mistress 10 when a youth. What has given its superior reputation to the Spectator, is the greater gravity of its pretensions, its moral dissertations and critical reasonings, by which I confess myself less edified than by other things, which are thought more lightly of. Systems and opinions change, but nature is always true. It is 15 the moral and didactic tone of the Spectator which makes us apt to think of Addison (according to Mandeville's sarcasm) as "a parson in a tie-wig." Many of his moral Essays are, however, exquisitely beautiful and quite happy. Such are the reflections on cheerfulness, those in Westminster Abbey, on the Royal 20 Exchange, and particularly some very affecting ones on the death of a young lady in the fourth volume. These, it must be allowed, are the perfection of elegant sermonising. His critical Essays are not so good. I prefer Steele's occasional selection of beautiful poetical passages, without any affectation of analysing 25 their beauties, to Addison's finer-spun theories. The best criticism in the Spectator, that on the Cartoons of Raphael, of which Mr. Fuseli has availed himself with great spirit in his Lectures, is by Steele.<sup>1</sup> I owed this acknowledgment to a writer who has so often put me in good humour with myself, and everything 30 about me, when few things else could, and when the tomes of

<sup>1</sup> The antithetical style and verbal paradoxes which Burke was so fond of, in which the epithet is a seeming contradiction to the substantive, such as "proud submission and dignified obedience," are, I think, first to be found in the Tatler.

casuistry and ecclesiastical history, with which the little duodecimo volumes of the *Tatler* were overwhelmed and surrounded, in the only library to which I had access when a boy, had tried their tranquillising effects upon me in vain. I had not long ago  
5 in my hands, by favour of a friend, an original copy of the quarto edition of the *Tatler*, with a list of the subscribers. It is curious to see some names there which we should hardly think of (that of Sir Isaac Newton is among them), and also to observe the degree of interest excited by those of the different persons,  
10 which is not determined according to the rules of the *Herald's* College. One literary name lasts as long as a whole race of heroes and their descendants! The *Guardian*, which followed the *Spectator*, was, as may be supposed, inferior to it.

The dramatic and conversational turn which forms the  
15 distinguishing feature and greatest charm of the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, is quite lost in the *Rambler* by Dr. Johnson. There is no reflected light thrown on human life from an assumed character, nor any direct one from a display of the author's own. The *Tatler* and *Spectator* are, as it were, made up of notes and  
20 memorandums of the events and incidents of the day, with finished studies after nature, and characters fresh from the life, which the writer moralises upon, and turns to account as they come before him: the *Rambler* is a collection of moral Essays, or scholastic theses, written on set subjects, and of which the  
25 individual characters and incidents are merely artificial illustrations, brought in to give a pretended relief to the dryness of didactic discussion. The *Rambler* is a splendid and imposing common-place-book of general topics, and rhetorical declamation on the conduct and business of human life. In this sense,  
30 there is hardly a reflection that had been suggested on such subjects which is not to be found in this celebrated work, and there is, perhaps, hardly a reflection to be found in it which had not been already suggested and developed by some other author, or in the common course of conversation. The mass of intellectual

wealth here heaped together is immense, but it is rather the result of gradual accumulation, the produce of the general intellect, labouring in the mine of knowledge and reflection, than dug out of the quarry, and dragged into the light by the industry and sagacity of a single mind. I am not here saying that 5 Dr. Johnson was a man without originality, compared with the ordinary run of men's minds, but he was not a man of original thought or genius, in the sense in which Montaigne or Lord Bacon was. He opened no new vein of precious ore, nor did he light upon any single pebbles of uncommon size and un- 10 rivalled lustre. We seldom meet with anything to "give us pause;" he does not set us thinking for the first time. His reflections present themselves like reminiscences; do not disturb the ordinary march of our thoughts; arrest our attention by the stateliness of their appearance, and the costliness of their garb, 15 but pass on and mingle with the throng of our impressions. After closing the volumes of the Rambler, there is nothing that we remember as a new truth gained to the mind, nothing indelibly stamped upon the memory; nor is there any passage that we wish to turn to as embodying any known principle or 20 observation, with such force and beauty that justice can only be done to the idea in the author's own words. Such, for instance, are many of the passages to be found in Burke, which shine by their own light, belong to no class, have neither equal nor counterpart, and of which we say that no one but the author could 25 have written them! There is neither the same boldness of design, nor mastery of execution in Johnson. In the one, the spark of genius seems to have met with its congenial matter: the shaft is sped; the forked lightning dresses up the face of nature in ghastly smiles, and the loud thunder rolls far away 30 from the ruin that is made. Dr. Johnson's style, on the contrary, resembles rather the rumbling of mimic thunder at one of our theatres; and the light he throws upon a subject is like the dazzling effect of phosphorus, or an *ignis fatuus* of words.

There is a wide difference, however, between perfect originality and perfect common-place: neither ideas nor expressions are trite or vulgar because they are not quite new. They are valuable, and ought to be repeated, if they have not become quite  
 5 common; and Johnson's style both of reasoning and imagery holds the middle rank between startling novelty and vapid common-place. Johnson has as much originality of thinking as Addison; but then he wants his familiarity of illustration, knowledge of character, and delightful humour. — What most  
 10 distinguishes Dr. Johnson from other writers is the pomp and uniformity of his style. All his periods are cast in the same mould, are of the same size and shape, and consequently have little fitness to the variety of things he professes to treat of. His subjects are familiar, but the author is always upon stilts.  
 15 He has neither ease nor simplicity, and his efforts at playfulness, in part, remind one of the lines in Milton: —

"—— The elephant  
 To make them sport wreath'd his proboscis lithe."

His Letters from Correspondents, in particular, are more pom-  
 20 pous and unwieldy than what he writes in his own person. This want of relaxation and variety of manner has, I think, after the first effects of novelty and surprise were over, been prejudicial to the matter. It takes from the general power not only to please, but to instruct. The monotony of style produces an  
 25 apparent monotony of ideas. What is really striking and valuable, is lost in the vain ostentation and circumlocution of the expression; for when we find the same pains and pomp of diction bestowed upon the most trifling as upon the most important parts of a sentence or discourse, we grow tired of distinguishing  
 30 between pretension and reality, and are disposed to confound the tinsel and bombast of the phraseology with want of weight in the thoughts. Thus, from the imposing and oracular nature of the style, people are tempted at first to imagine that our

author's speculations are all wisdom and profundity : till having found out their mistake in some instances, they suppose that there is nothing but common-place in them, concealed under verbiage and pedantry ; and in both they are wrong. The fault of Dr. Johnson's style is, that he reduces all things to the same 5 artificial and unmeaning level. It destroys all shades of difference, the association between words and things. It is a perpetual paradox and innovation. He condescends to the familiar till we are ashamed of our interest in it : he expands the little till it looks big. " If he were to write a fable of little fishes," as 10 Goldsmith said of him, " he would make them speak like great whales." We can no more distinguish the most familiar objects in his description of them, than we can a well-known face under a huge painted mask. The structure of his sentences, which was his own invention, and which has been generally imitated since 15 his time, is a species of rhyming in prose, where one clause answers to another in measure and quantity, like the tagging of syllables at the end of a verse ; the close of the period follows as mechanically as the oscillation of a pendulum, the sense is balanced with the sound ; each sentence, revolving round its 20 centre of gravity, is contained with itself like a couplet, and each paragraph forms itself into a stanza. Dr. Johnson is also a complete balance-master in the topics of morality. He never encourages hope, but he counteracts it by fear ; he never elicits a truth, but he suggests some objection in answer to it. He 25 seizes and alternately quits the clue of reason, lest it should involve him in the labyrinths of endless error : he wants confidence in himself and his fellows. He dares not trust himself with the immediate impressions of things, for fear of compromising his dignity ; or follow them into their consequences, for fear of 30 committing his prejudices. His timidity is the result, not of ignorance, but of morbid apprehension. " He runs the great circle, and is still at home." No advance is made by his writings in any sentiment, or mode of reasoning. Out of the pale

of established authority and received dogmas, all is sceptical, loose, and desultory: he seems in imagination to strengthen the dominion of prejudice, as he weakens and dissipates that of reason; and round the rock of faith and power, on the edge of which he slumbers blindfold and uneasy, the waves and billows of uncertain and dangerous opinion roar and heave for evermore. His *Rasselas* is the most melancholy and debilitating moral speculation that ever was put forth. Doubtful of the faculties of his mind, as of his organs of vision, Johnson trusted only to his feelings and his fears. He cultivated a belief in witches as an out-guard to the evidences of religion; and abused Milton, and patronised Lauder, in spite of his aversion to his countrymen, as a step to secure the existing establishment in church and state. This was neither right feeling nor sound logic.

The most triumphant record of the talents and character of Johnson is to be found in Boswell's *Life* of him. The man was superior to the author. When he threw aside his pen, which he regarded as an incumbrance, he became not only learned and thoughtful, but acute, witty, humorous, natural, honest; hearty and determined, "the king of good fellows and wale of old men." There are as many smart repartees, profound remarks, and keen invectives to be found in Boswell's "inventory of all he said," as are recorded of any celebrated man. The life and dramatic play of his conversation forms a contrast to his written works. His natural powers and undisguised opinions were called out in convivial intercourse. In public, he practised with the foils on: in private, he unsheathed the sword of controversy, and it was "the Ebro's temper." The eagerness of opposition roused him from his natural sluggishness and acquired timidity; he returned blow for blow; and whether the trial were of argument or wit, none of his rivals could boast much of the encounter. Burke seems to have been the only person who had a chance with him: and it is the unpardonable sin of Boswell's work, that he has purposely omitted their combats of strength and skill.

Goldsmith asked, "Does he wind into a subject like a serpent, as Burke does?" And when exhausted with sickness, he himself said, "If that fellow Burke were here now, he would kill me." It is to be observed, that Johnson's colloquial style was as blunt, direct, and downright, as his style of studied composition was 5 involved and circuitous. As when Topham Beauclerc and Langton knocked him up at his chambers, at three in the morning, and he came to the door with the poker in his hand, but seeing them, exclaimed, "What, is it you, my lads? then I'll have a frisk with you!" And he afterwards reproaches Langton, who 10 was a literary milksop, for leaving them to go to an engagement "with some *un-ideal* girls." What words to come from the mouth of the great moralist and lexicographer! His good deeds were as many as his good sayings. His domestic habits, his tenderness to servants, and readiness to oblige his friends; the 15 quantity of strong tea that he drank to keep down sad thoughts; his many labours reluctantly begun, and irresolutely laid aside; his honest acknowledgment of his own, and indulgence to the weaknesses of others; his throwing himself back in the post-chaise with Boswell, and saying, "Now I think I am a good- 20 humoured fellow," though nobody thought him so, and yet he was; his quitting the society of Garrick and his actresses, and his reason for it; his dining with Wilkes, and his kindness to Goldsmith; his sitting with the young ladies on his knee at the Mitre, to give them good advice, in which situation, if not ex- 25 plained, he might be taken for Falstaff; and last and noblest, his carrying the unfortunate victim of disease and dissipation on his back up through Fleet Street, (an act which realises the parable of the good Samaritan)—all these, and innumerable others, endear him to the reader, and must be remembered to 30 his lasting honour. He had faults, but they lie buried with him. He had his prejudices and his intolerant feelings; but he suffered enough in the conflict of his own mind with them. For if no man can be happy in the free exercise of his reason, no wise

man can be happy without it. His were not time-serving, heartless, hypocritical prejudices ; but deep, inwoven, not to be rooted out but with life and hope, which he found from old habit necessary to his own peace of mind, and thought so to the peace  
5 of mankind. I do not hate, but love him for them. They were between himself and his conscience ; and should be left to that higher tribunal, "where they in trembling hope repose, the bosom of his Father and his God." In a word, he has left behind him few wiser or better men.

10 The herd of his imitators shewed what he was by their disproportionate effects. The Periodical Essayists, that succeeded the Rambler are, and deserve to be, little read at present. The Adventurer, by Hawksworth, is completely trite and vapid, aping all the faults of Johnson's style, without anything to atone for  
15 them. The sentences are often absolutely unmeaning ; and one half of each might regularly be left blank. The World, and Connoisseur, which followed, are a little better ; and in the last of these there is one good idea, that of a man in indifferent health, who judges of every one's title to respect from their  
20 possession of this blessing, and bows to a sturdy beggar with sound limbs and a florid complexion, while he turns his back upon a lord who is a valetudinarian.

Goldsmith's Citizen of the World, like all his works, bears the stamp of the author's mind. It does not "go about to cozen  
25 reputation without the stamp of merit." He is more observing, more original, more natural and picturesque than Johnson. His work is written on the model of the Persian Letters ; and contrives to give an abstracted and somewhat perplexing view of things, by opposing foreign prepossessions to our own, and thus  
30 stripping objects of their customary disguises. Whether truth is elicited in this collision of contrary absurdities, I do not know ; but I confess the process is too ambiguous and full of intricacy to be very amusing to my plain understanding. For light summer reading, it is like walking in a garden full of traps and

pitfalls. It necessarily gives rise to paradoxes, and there are some very bold ones in the Essays, which would subject an author less established to no very agreeable sort of *censura literaria*. Thus the Chinese philosopher exclaims very unadvisedly, "The bonzes and priests of all religions keep up superstition and im- posture : all reformatations begin with the laity." Goldsmith, however, was staunch in his practical creed, and might bolt speculative extravagances with impunity. There is a striking difference in this respect between him and Addison, who, if he attacked authority, took care to have common sense on his side, and never hazarded any thing offensive to the feelings of others, or on the strength of his own discretional opinion. There is another inconvenience in this assumption of an exotic character and tone of sentiment, that it produces an inconsistency between the knowledge which the individual has time to acquire, and which the author is bound to communicate. Thus the Chinese has not been in England three days before he is acquainted with the characters of the three countries which compose this kingdom, and describes them to his friend at Canton, by extracts from the newspapers of each metropolis. The nationality of Scotchmen is thus ridiculed : — "*Edinburgh*. We are positive when we say, that Sanders Macgregor, lately executed for horse-stealing, is not a native of Scotland, but born at Carrickfergus." Now this is very good ; but how should our Chinese philosopher find it out by instinct ? Beau Tibbs, a prominent character in this little work, is the best comic sketch since the time of Addison ; unrivalled in his finery, his vanity, and his poverty.

I have only to mention the names of the Lounger and the Mirror, which are ranked by the author's admirers with Sterne for sentiment, and with Addison for humour. I shall not enter into that : but I know that the story of La Roche is not like the story of Le Fevre, nor one hundredth part so good. Do I say this from prejudice to the author ? No : for I have read his

novels. Of the *Man of the World* I cannot think so favourably as some others; nor shall I here dwell on the picturesque and romantic beauties of *Julia de Roubigné*, the early favourite of the author of *Rosamond Gray*; but of the *Man of Feeling* I  
5 would speak with grateful recollections: nor is it possible to forget the sensitive, irresolute, interesting *Harley*; and that lone figure of *Miss Walton* in it, that floats in the horizon, dim and ethereal, the day-dream of her lover's youthful fancy — better, far better than all the realities of life!

## CHARACTER OF MR. BURKE

It is not without reluctance that we speak of the vices and infirmities of such a mind as Burke's: but the poison of high example has by far the widest range of destruction: and, for the sake of public honour and individual integrity, we think it right to say, that however it may be defended upon other grounds, 5 the political career of that eminent individual has no title to the praise of consistency. Mr. Burke, the opponent of the American war, and Mr. Burke, the opponent of the French Revolution, are not the same person, but opposite persons — not opposite persons only, but deadly enemies. In the latter period, he abandoned not only all his practical conclusions, but all the principles 10 on which they were founded. He proscribed all his former sentiments, denounced all his former friends, rejected and reviled all the maxims to which he had formerly appealed as incontestable. In the American war, he constantly spoke of the rights 15 of the people as inherent, and inalienable: after the French Revolution, he began by treating them with the chicanery of a sophist, and ended by raving at them with the fury of a maniac. In the former case, he held out the duty of resistance to oppression, as the palladium and only ultimate resource of 20 natural liberty; in the latter, he scouted, prejudged, vilified and nicknamed, all resistance in the abstract, as a foul and unnatural union of rebellion and sacrilege. In the one case, to answer the purposes of faction, he made it out, that the people are always in the right; in the other, to answer different ends, he 25 made it out that they are always in the wrong — lunatics in the hands of their royal keepers, patients in the sick-wards of an

hospital, or felons in the condemned cells of a prison. In the one, he considered that there was a constant tendency on the part of the prerogative to encroach on the rights of the people, which ought always to be the object of the most watchful jealousy, and of resistance, when necessary: in the other, he pretended to regard it as the sole occupation and ruling passion of those in power, to watch over the liberties and happiness of their subjects. The burthen of all his speeches on the American war, was conciliation, concession, timely reform, as the only practicable or desirable alternative of rebellion: the object of all his writings on the French Revolution was, to deprecate and explode all concession and all reform, as encouraging rebellion, and as an irretrievable step to revolution and anarchy. In the one, he insulted kings personally, as among the lowest and worst of mankind; in the other, he held them up to the imagination of his readers, as sacred abstractions. In the one case, he was a partisan of the people, to court popularity; in the other, to gain the favour of the Court, he became the apologist of all courtly abuses. In the one case, he took part with those who were actually rebels against his Sovereign: in the other, he denounced as rebels and traitors, all those of his own countrymen who did not yield sympathetic allegiance to a foreign Sovereign, whom we had always been in the habit of treating as an arbitrary tyrant.

Nobody will accuse the principles of his present Majesty, or the general measures of his reign, of inconsistency. If they had no other merit, they have, at least, that of having been all along actuated by one uniform and constant spirit: yet Mr. Burke at one time vehemently opposed, and afterwards most intemperately extolled them: and it was for his recanting his opposition, not for his persevering in it, that he received his pension. He does not himself mention his flaming speeches in the American war, as among the public services which had entitled him to this remuneration.

The truth is, that Burke was a man of fine fancy and subtle reflection ; but not of sound and practical judgment, nor of high or rigid principles. — As to his understanding, he certainly was not a great philosopher ; for his works of mere abstract reasoning are shallow and inefficient : — nor was he a man of sense and 5 business ; for, both in counsel and in conduct, he alarmed his friends as much at least as his opponents : — but he was an acute and accomplished man of letters — an ingenious political essayist. He applied the habit of reflection, which he had borrowed from his metaphysical studies, but which was not 10 competent to the discovery of any elementary truth in that department, with great facility and success, to the mixed mass of human affairs. He knew more of the political machine than a recluse philosopher ; and he speculated more profoundly on its principles and general results than a mere politician. He 15 saw a number of fine distinctions and changeable aspects of things, the good mixed with the ill, and the ill mixed with the good ; and with a sceptical indifference, in which the exercise of his own ingenuity was obviously the governing principle, suggested various topics to qualify or assist the judgment of 20 others. But for this very reason, he was little calculated to become a leader or a partizan in any important practical measure. For the habit of his mind would lead him to find out a reason for or against any thing : and it is not on speculative refinements (which belong to *every* side of a question), but on a just estimate 25 of the aggregate mass and extended combinations of objections and advantages, that we ought to decide or act. Burke had the power of throwing true or false weights into the scales of political casuistry, but not firmness of mind (or, shall we say honesty enough) to hold the balance. When he took a side, his 30 vanity or his spleen more frequently gave the casting vote than his judgment ; and the fieriness of his zeal was in exact proportion to the levity of his understanding, and the want of conscious sincerity.

He was fitted by nature and habit for the studies and labours of the closet; and was generally mischievous when he came out; because the very subtlety of his reasoning, which, left to itself, would have counteracted its own activity, or found its level in the common sense of mankind, became a dangerous engine in the hands of power, which is always eager to make use of the most plausible pretexts to cover the most fatal designs. That which, if applied as a general observation to human affairs, is a valuable truth suggested to the mind, may, when forced into the interested defence of a particular measure or system, become the grossest and basest sophistry. Facts or consequences never stood in the way of this speculative politician. He fitted them to his preconceived theories, instead of conforming his theories to them. They were the playthings of his style, the sport of his fancy. They were the straws of which his imagination made a blaze, and were consumed, like straws, in the blaze they had served to kindle. The fine things he said about Liberty and Humanity, in his speech on the Begum's affairs, told equally well, whether Warren Hastings was a tyrant or not: nor did he care one jot who caused the famine he described, so that he described it in a way that no one else could. On the same principle, he represented the French priests and nobles under the old regime as excellent moral people, very charitable and very religious, in the teeth of notorious facts, — to answer to the handsome things he had to say in favour of priesthood and nobility in general; and, with similar views, he falsifies the records of our English Revolution, and puts an interpretation on the word *abdication*, of which a schoolboy would be ashamed. He constructed his whole theory of government, in short, not on rational, but on picturesque and fanciful principles; as if the king's crown were a painted gewgaw, to be looked at on gala-days; titles an empty sound to please the ear; and the whole order of society a theatrical procession. His lamentations over the age of chivalry, and his projected crusade to restore it, are

about as wise as if any one, from reading the Beggar's Opera, should take to picking of pockets : or, from admiring the landscapes of Salvator Rosa, should wish to convert the abodes of civilised life into the haunts of wild beasts and banditti. On this principle of false refinement, there is no abuse, nor system 5 of abuses, that does not admit of an easy and triumphant defence ; for there is something which a merely speculative inquirer may always find out, good as well as bad, in every possible system, the best or the worst ; and if we can once get rid of the restraints of common sense and honesty, we may 10 easily prove, by plausible words, that liberty and slavery, peace and war, plenty and famine, are matters of perfect indifference. This is the school of politics, of which Mr. Burke was at the head ; and it is perhaps to his example, in this respect, that we owe the prevailing tone of many of those newspaper paragraphs, 15 which Mr. Coleridge thinks so invaluable an accession to our political philosophy.

Burke's literary talents were, after all, his chief excellence. His style has all the familiarity of conversation, and all the research of the most elaborate composition. He says what he 20 wants to say, by any means, nearer or more remote, within his reach. He makes use of the most common or scientific terms, of the longest or shortest sentences, of the plainest and most downright, or of the most figurative modes of speech. He gives for the most part loose reins to his imagination, and 25 follows it as far as the language will carry him. As long as the one or the other has any resources in store to make the reader feel and see the thing as he has conceived it, in its nicest shades of difference, in its utmost degree of force and splendour, he never disdains, and never fails to employ them. Yet, in the 30 extremes of his mixed style, there is not much affectation, and but little either of pedantry or of coarseness. He everywhere gives the image he wishes to give, in its true and appropriate colouring : and it is the very crowd and variety of these images

that has given to his language its peculiar tone of animation and even of passion. It is his impatience to transfer his conceptions entire, living, in all their rapidity, strength, and glancing variety, to the minds of others, that constantly pushes him to  
5 the verge of extravagance, and yet supports him there in dignified security —

“Never so sure our rapture to create,  
As when he treads the brink of all we hate.”

He is the most poetical of our prose writers, and at the same  
10 time his prose never degenerates into the mere effeminacy of poetry ; for he always aims at overpowering rather than at pleasing ; and consequently sacrifices beauty and delicacy to force and vividness. He has invariably a task to perform, a positive purpose to execute, an effect to produce. His only object  
15 is therefore to strike hard, and in the right place ; if he misses his mark, he repeats his blow ; and does not care how ungraceful the action, or how clumsy the instrument, provided it brings down his antagonist.

## ON POETRY IN GENERAL

The best general notion which I can give of poetry is, that it is the natural impression of any object or event, by its vividness exciting an involuntary movement of imagination and passion, and producing, by sympathy, a certain modulation of the voice, or sounds, expressing it.

5

In treating of poetry, I shall speak first of the subject-matter of it, next of the forms of expression to which it gives birth, and afterwards of its connection with harmony of sound.

Poetry is the language of the imagination and the passions. It relates to whatever gives immediate pleasure or pain to the human mind. It comes home to the bosoms and businesses of men; for nothing but what so comes home to them in the most general and intelligible shape, can be a subject for poetry. Poetry is the universal language which the heart holds with nature and itself. He who has a contempt for poetry cannot have much respect for himself, or for anything else. It is not a mere frivolous accomplishment, (as some persons have been led to imagine) the trifling amusement of a few idle readers or leisure hours — it has been the study and delight of mankind in all ages. Many people suppose that poetry is something to be found only in books, contained in lines of ten syllables, with like endings: but wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of the sea, in the growth of a flower that “spreads its sweet leaves to the air, and dedicates its beauty to the sun,” — *there* is poetry, in its birth. If history is a grave study, poetry may be said to be a graver: its materials lie deeper, and are spread wider. History treats, for

the most part, of the cumbrous and unwieldy masses of things, the empty cases in which the affairs of the world are packed, under the heads of intrigue or war, in different states, and from century to century : but there is no thought or feeling that can  
5 have entered into the mind of man which he would be eager to communicate to others, or which they would listen to with delight, that is not a fit subject for poetry. It is not a branch of authorship : it is " the stuff of which our life is made." The rest is " mere oblivion," a dead letter : for all that is worth  
10 remembering in life, is the poetry of it. Fear is poetry, hope is poetry, love is poetry, hatred is poetry, contempt, jealousy, remorse, admiration, wonder, pity, despair, or madness, are all poetry. Poetry is that fine particle within us, that expands, rarefies, refines, raises our whole being : without it " man's life  
15 is poor as beast's." Man is a poetical animal : and those of us who do not study the principles of poetry, act upon them all our lives, like Moliere's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, who had always spoken prose without knowing it. The child is a poet in fact, when he first plays at hide-and-seek, or repeats the story of  
20 Jack the Giant-killer ; the shepherd-boy is a poet, when he first crowns his mistress with a garland of flowers ; the countryman, when he stops to look at the rainbow ; the city-apprentice, when he gazes after the Lord-Mayor's show ; the miser, when he hugs his gold ; the courtier, who builds his hopes upon a smile ; the  
25 savage, who paints his idol with blood ; the slave, who worships a tyrant, or the tyrant, who fancies himself a god ; — the vain, the ambitious, the proud, the choleric man, the hero and the coward, the beggar and the king, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, all live in a world of their own making ; and  
30 the poet does no more than describe what all the others think and act. If his art is folly and madness, it is folly and madness at second hand. " There is warrant for it." Poets alone have not " such seething brains, such shaping fantasies, that apprehend more than cooler reason " can,

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
 Are of imagination all compact.  
 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;  
 The madman. While the lover, all as frantic,  
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt. 5  
 The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
 Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth to heav'n;  
 And as imagination bodies forth  
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
 Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing 10  
 A local habitation and a name.  
 Such tricks hath strong imagination."

If poetry is a dream, the business of life is much the same.  
 If it is a fiction, made up of what we wish things to be, and  
 fancy that they are, because we wish them so, there is no other 15  
 nor better reality. Ariosto has described the loves of Angelica  
 and Medoro: but was not Medoro, who carved the name of  
 his mistress on the barks of trees, as much enamoured of her  
 charms as he? Homer has celebrated the anger of Achilles:  
 but was not the hero as mad as the poet? Plato banished the 20  
 poets from his Commonwealth, lest their descriptions of the  
 natural man should spoil his mathematical man, who was to be  
 without passions and affections, who was neither to laugh nor  
 weep, to feel sorrow nor anger, to be cast down nor elated by  
 any thing. This was a chimera, however, which never existed 25  
 but in the brain of the inventor; and Homer's] poetical world  
 has outlived Plato's philosophical Republic.

Poetry then is an imitation of nature, but the imagination  
 and the passions are a part of man's nature. We shape things  
 according to our wishes and fancies, without poetry; but poetry 30  
 is the most emphatical language that can be found for those  
 creations of the mind "which ecstasy is very cunning in." Nei-  
 ther a mere description of natural objects, nor a mere delineation  
 of natural feelings, however distinct or forcible, constitutes the  
 ultimate end and aim of poetry, without the heightenings of the 35  
 imagination. The light of poetry is not only a direct but also a

reflected light, that, while it shews us the object, throws a sparkling radiance on all around it: the flame of the passions, communicated to the imagination, reveals to us, as with a flash of lightning, the inmost recesses of thought, and penetrates our whole being. Poetry represents forms chiefly as they suggest other forms; feelings, as they suggest forms or other feelings. Poetry puts a spirit of life and motion into the universe. It describes the flowing, not the fixed. It does not define the limits of sense, or analyse the distinctions of the understanding, but signifies the excess of the imagination beyond the actual or ordinary impression of any object or feeling. The poetical impression of any object is that uneasy, exquisite sense of beauty or power that cannot be contained within itself; that is impatient of all limit; that (as flame bends to flame) strives to link itself to some other image of kindred beauty or grandeur; to enshrine itself, as it were, in the highest forms of fancy, and to relieve the aching sense of pleasure by expressing it in the boldest manner, and by the most striking examples of the same quality in other instances. Poetry, according to Lord Bacon, for this reason, "has something divine in it, because it raises the mind and hurries it into sublimity, by conforming the shows of things to the desires of the soul, instead of subjecting the soul to external things, as reason and history do." It is strictly the language of the imagination; and the imagination is that faculty which represents objects, not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings, into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations of power. This language is not the less true to nature, because it is false in point of fact; but so much the more true and natural, if it conveys the impression which the object under the influence of passion makes on the mind. Let an object, for instance, be presented to the senses in a state of agitation or fear — and the imagination will distort or magnify the object, and convert it into the likeness of whatever is most proper to encourage the fear.

"Our eyes are made the fools" of our other faculties. This is the universal law of the imagination,

"That if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;  
Or in the night imagining some fear,  
How easy is each bush suppos'd a bear!" 5

When Iachimo says of Imogen,

"—— The flame o' th' taper  
Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids  
To see the enclosed lights" — 10

this passionate interpretation of the motion of the flame to accord with the speaker's own feelings, is true poetry. The lover, equally with the poet, speaks of the auburn tresses of his mistress as locks of shining gold, because the least tinge of yellow in the hair has, from novelty and a sense of personal beauty, a more 15 lustrous effect to the imagination than the purest gold. We compare a man of gigantic stature to a tower: not that he is anything like so large, but because the excess of his size beyond what we are accustomed to expect, or the usual size of things of the same class, produces by contrast a greater feeling of magni- 20 tude and ponderous strength than another object of ten times the same dimensions. The intensity of the feeling makes up for the disproportion of the objects. Things are equal to the imagination, which have the power of affecting the mind with an equal degree of terror, admiration, delight, or love. When Lear calls 25 upon the heavens to avenge his cause, "for they are old like him," there is nothing extravagant or impious in this sublime identification of his age with theirs; for there is no other image which could do justice to the agonising sense of his wrongs and his despair! 30

Poetry is the high-wrought enthusiasm of fancy and feeling. As in describing natural objects, it impregnates sensible impressions with the forms of fancy, so it describes the feelings of pleasure or pain, by blending them with the strongest movements

of passion, and the most striking forms of nature. Tragic poetry, which is the most impassioned species of it, strives to carry on the feeling to the utmost point of sublimity or pathos, by all the force of comparison or contrast ; loses the sense of present suffering in the imaginary exaggeration of it ; exhausts the terror or pity by an unlimited indulgence of it ; grapples with impossibilities in its desperate impatience of restraint ; throws us back upon the past, forward into the future ; brings every moment of our being or object of nature in startling review before us ; and in the rapid whirl of events, lifts us from the depths of woe to the highest contemplations on human life. When Lear says of Edgar, " Nothing but his unkind daughters could have brought him to this," what a bewildered amazement, what a wrench of the imagination, that cannot be brought to conceive of any other cause of misery than that which has bowed it down, and absorbs all other sorrow in its own ! His sorrow, like a flood, supplies the sources of all other sorrow. Again, when he exclaims in the mad scene, " The little dogs and all, Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me ! " it is passion lending occasion to imagination to make every creature in league against him, conjuring up ingratitude and insult in their least looked-for and most galling shapes, searching every thread and fibre of his heart, and finding out the last remaining image of respect or attachment in the bottom of his breast, only to torture and kill it ! In like manner, the " So I am " of Cordelia, gushes from her heart like a torrent of tears, relieving it of a weight of love and of supposed ingratitude, which had pressed upon it for years. What a fine return of the passion upon itself is that in Othello — with what a mingled agony of regret and despair he clings to the last traces of departed happiness — when he exclaims,

"—— Oh now, for ever

Farewel the tranquil mind. Farewel content ;  
Farewel the plumed troops and the big war,  
That make ambition virtue ! Oh farewell !  
Farewel the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,

The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,  
 The royal banner, and all quality,  
 Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war :  
 And O you mortal engines, whose rude throats  
 Th' immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit, 5  
 Farewel ! Othello's occupation's gone ! ”

How his passion lashes itself up and swells and rages like a tide in its sounding course, when in answer to the doubts expressed of his returning love, he says,

“ Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic sea, 10  
 Whose icy current and compulsive course  
 Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on  
 To the Propontic and the Hellespont :  
 Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,  
 Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love, 15  
 Till that a capable and wide revenge  
 Swallow them up.” ——

The climax of his expostulation afterwards with Desdemona is at that line,

“ But there where I have garner'd up my heart, 20  
 To be discarded thence ! ” ——

One mode in which the dramatic exhibition of passion excites our sympathy without raising our disgust is, that in proportion as it sharpens the edge of calamity and disappointment, it strengthens the desire of good. It enhances our consciousness 25 of the blessing, by making us sensible of the magnitude of the loss. The storm of passion lays bare and shews us the rich depths of the human soul : the whole of our existence, the sum total of our passions and pursuits, of that which we desire and that which we dread, is brought before us by contrast ; the ac- 30 tion and re-action are equal ; the keenness of immediate suffering only gives us a more intense aspiration after, and a more intimate participation with the antagonist world of good ; makes us drink deeper of the cup of human life ; tugs at the heart-strings ; loosens the pressure about them ; and calls the springs 35 of thought and feeling into play with tenfold force.

- Impassioned poetry is an emanation of the moral and intellectual part of our nature, as well as of the sensitive — of the desire to know, the will to act, and the power to feel; and ought to appeal to these different parts of our constitution, in order to  
5 be perfect. The domestic or prose tragedy, which is thought to be the most natural, is in this sense the least so, because it appeals almost exclusively to one of these faculties, our sensibility. The tragedies of Moore and Lillo, for this reason, however affecting at the time, oppress and lie like a dead weight on  
10 the mind, a load of misery which it is unable to throw off; the tragedy of Shakspeare, which is true poetry, stirs our inmost affections, abstracts evil from itself by combining it with all the forms of imagination, and with the deepest workings of the heart; and rouses the whole man within us.
- 15 The pleasure, however, derived from tragic poetry is not any thing peculiar to it as poetry, as a fictitious and fanciful thing. It is not an anomaly of the imagination. It has its source and ground-work in the common love of strong excitement. As Mr. Burke observes, people flock to see a tragedy; but if there  
20 were a public execution in the next street, the theatre would soon be empty. It is not then the difference between fiction and reality that solves the difficulty. Children are satisfied with the stories of ghosts and witches in plain prose: nor do the hawkers of full, true, and particular accounts of murders and executions  
25 about the streets find it necessary to have them turned into penny ballads, before they can dispose of these interesting and authentic documents. The grave politician drives a thriving trade of abuse and calumnies poured out against those whom he makes his enemies for no other end than that he may live by them.
- 30 The popular preacher makes less frequent mention of heaven than of hell. Oaths and nicknames are only a more vulgar sort of poetry or rhetoric. We are as fond of indulging our violent passions as of reading a description of those of others. We are as prone to make a torment of our fears, as to luxuriate in our

hopes of good. If it be asked, Why we do so? the best answer will be, because we cannot help it. The sense of power is as strong a principle in the mind as the love of pleasure. Objects of terror and pity exercise the same despotic control over it as those of love or beauty. It is as natural to hate as to love, to despise 5 as to admire, to express our hatred or contempt, as our love or admiration :

" Masterless passion sways us to the mood  
Of what it likes or loathes."

Not that we like what we loathe ; but we like to indulge our 10 hatred and scorn of it, to dwell upon it, to exasperate our idea of it by every refinement of ingenuity and extravagance of illustration ; to make it a bugbear to ourselves, to point it out to others in all the splendour of deformity, to embody it to the 15 senses, to stigmatise it by name, to grapple with it in thought — in action, to sharpen our intellect, to arm our will against it, to know the worst we have to contend with, and to contend with it to the utmost. Poetry is only the highest eloquence of passion, the most vivid form of expression that can be given to our conception of any thing, whether pleasurable or painful, mean 20 or dignified, delightful or distressing. It is the perfect coincidence of the image and the words with the feeling we have, and of which we cannot get rid in any other way, that gives an instant "satisfaction to the thought." This is equally the origin of wit and fancy, of comedy and tragedy, of the sublime and pathetic. 25 When Pope says of the Lord Mayor's shew, —

" Now night descending, the proud scene is o'er,  
But lives in Settle's numbers one day more !"

— when Collins makes Danger, " with limbs of giant mould,"

—— " Throw him on the steep  
Of some loose hanging rock asleep " : 30

when Lear calls out in extreme anguish,

" Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,  
How much more hideous, shew'st in a child  
Than the sea-monster ! " 35

— the passion of contempt in the one case, of terror in the other, and of indignation in the last, is perfectly satisfied. We see the thing ourselves, and shew it to others as we feel it to exist, and as, in spite of ourselves, we are compelled to think of it. The  
5 imagination, by thus embodying and turning them to shape, gives an obvious relief to the indistinct and importunate cravings of the will. — We do not wish the thing to be so ; but we wish it to appear such as it is. For knowledge is conscious power ; and the mind is no longer, in this case, the dupe, though it may be  
10 the victim of vice or folly.

Poetry is in all its shapes the language of the imagination and the passions, of fancy and will. Nothing, therefore, can be more absurd than the outcry which has been sometimes raised by frigid and pedantic critics, for reducing the language of poetry to the  
15 standard of common sense and reason : for the end and use of poetry, “ both at the first and now, was and is to hold the mirror up to nature,” seen through the medium of passion and imagination, not divested of that medium by means of literal truth or abstract reason. The painter of history might as well be re-  
20 quired to represent the face of a person who has just trod upon a serpent with the still-life expression of a common portrait, as the poet to describe the most striking and vivid impressions which things can be supposed to make upon the mind, in the language of common conversation. Let who will strip nature  
25 of the colours and the shapes of fancy, the poet is not bound to do so : the impressions of common sense and strong imagination, that is, of passion and indifference, cannot be the same, and they must have a separate language to do justice to either. Objects must strike differently upon the mind, independently of  
30 what they are in themselves, as long as we have a different interest in them, as we see them in a different point of view, nearer or at a greater distance (morally or physically speaking) from novelty, from old acquaintance, from our ignorance of them, from our fear of their consequences, from contrast, from

unexpected likeness. We can no more take away the faculty of the imagination, than we can see all objects without light or shade. Some things must dazzle us by their preternatural light; others must hold us in suspense, and tempt our curiosity to explore their obscurity. Those who would dispel these various 5 illusions, to give us their drab-coloured creation in their stead, are not very wise. Let the naturalist, if he will, catch the glow-worm, carry it home with him in a box, and find it next morning nothing but a little grey worm; let the poet or the lover of poetry visit it at evening, when beneath the scented hawthorn 10 and the crescent moon it has built itself a palace of emerald light. This is also one part of nature, one appearance which the glow-worm presents, and that not the least interesting; so poetry is one part of the history of the human mind, though it is neither science nor philosophy. It cannot be concealed, how- 15 ever, that the progress of knowledge and refinement has a tendency to circumscribe the limits of the imagination, and to clip the wings of poetry. The province of the imagination is principally visionary, the unknown and undefined: the understanding restores things to their natural boundaries, and strips them of 20 their fanciful pretensions. Hence the history of religious and poetical enthusiasm is much the same; and both have received a sensible shock from the progress of experimental philosophy. It is the undefined and uncommon that gives birth and scope to the imagination: we can only fancy what we do not know. As 25 in looking into the mazes of a tangled wood we fill them with what shapes we please, with ravenous beasts, with caverns vast, and drear enchantments, so in our ignorance of the world about us, we make gods or devils of the first object we see, and set no bounds to the wilful suggestions of our hopes and fears. 30

“And visions, as poetic eyes avow,  
Hang on each leaf and cling to every bough.”

There can never be another Jacob's Dream. Since that time, the heavens have gone farther off, and grown astronomical. They

have become averse to the imagination, nor will they return to us on the squares of the distances, or on Doctor Chalmers's Discourses. Rembrandt's picture brings the matter nearer to us. — It is not only the progress of mechanical knowledge, but  
5 the necessary advances of civilization that are unfavourable to the spirit of poetry. We not only stand in less awe of the preternatural world, but we can calculate more surely, and look with more indifference, upon the regular routine of this. The heroes of the fabulous ages rid the world of monsters and giants.  
10 At present we are less exposed to the vicissitudes of good or evil, to the incursions of wild beasts or "bandit fierce," or to the unmitigated fury of the elements. The time has been that "our fell of hair would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir as life were in it." But the police spoils all; and we now hardly so  
15 much as dream of a midnight murder. Macbeth is only tolerated in this country for the sake of the music; and in the United States of America, where the philosophical principles of government are carried still farther in theory and practice, we find that the Beggar's Opera is hooted from the stage. Society, by  
20 degrees, is constructed into a machine that carries us safely and insipidly from one end of life to the other, in a very comfortable prose style.

"Obscurity her curtain round them drew,  
And siren Sloth a dull quietus sung."

25 The remarks which have been here made, would, in some measure, lead to a solution of the question of the comparative merits of painting and poetry. I do not mean to give any preference, but it should seem that the argument which has been sometimes set up, that painting must affect the imagination more strongly,  
30 because it represents the image more distinctly, is not well founded. We may assume without much temerity, that poetry is more poetical than painting. When artists or connoisseurs talk on stilts about the poetry of painting, they shew that they know little about poetry, and have little love for the art.

Painting gives the object itself ; poetry what it implies. Painting embodies what a thing contains in itself ; poetry suggests what exists out of it, in any manner connected with it. But this last is the proper province of the imagination. Again, as it relates to passion, painting gives the event, poetry the progress of events : 5 but it is during the progress, in the interval of expectation and suspense, while our hopes and fears are strained to the highest pitch of breathless agony, that the pinch of the interest lies.

“ Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is 10  
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.  
The mortal instruments are then in council ;  
And the state of man, like to a little kingdom,  
Suffers then the nature of an insurrection.”

But by the time that the picture is painted, all is over. Faces 15 are the best part of a picture ; but even faces are not what we chiefly remember in what interests us most. But it may be asked then, Is there anything better than Claude Lorraine’s landscapes, than Titian’s portraits, than Raphael’s cartoons, or the Greek statues ? Of the two first I shall say nothing, as they are evi- 20 dently picturesque, rather than imaginative. Raphael’s cartoons are certainly the finest comments that ever were made on the Scriptures. Would their effect be the same if we were not acquainted with the text ? But the New Testament existed before the cartoons. There is one subject of which there is no cartoon, 25 Christ washing the feet of the disciples the night before his death. But that chapter does not need a commentary ! It is for want of some such resting-place for the imagination that the Greek statues are little else than specious forms. They are marble to the touch and to the heart. They have not an informing principle 30 within them :

“ ——— In outward show  
Elaborate, of inward less exact.”

In their faultless excellence they appear sufficient to themselves. By their beauty they are raised above the frailties of passion or 35

suffering. By their beauty they are deified. But they are not objects of religious faith to us, and their forms are a reproach to common humanity. They seem to have no sympathy with us, and not to want our admiration.

5 Poetry in its matter and form is natural imagery or feeling, combined with passion and fancy. In its mode of conveyance, it combines the ordinary use of language with musical expression. There is a question of long standing, in what the essence of poetry consists, or what it is that determines why one set of  
 10 ideas should be expressed in prose, another in verse. Milton has told us his idea of poetry in a single line —

" Thoughts that voluntary move  
 Harmonious numbers."

As there are certain sounds that excite certain movements,  
 15 and the song and dance go together, so there are, no doubt, certain thoughts that lead to certain tones of voice, or modulations of sound, and change "the words of Mercury into the songs of Apollo." There is a striking instance of this adaptation of the movement of sound and rhythm to the subject, in Spenser's description of the Satyrs accompanying Una to the cave of Sylvanus.  
 20

"So from the ground she fearless doth arise  
 And walketh forth without suspect of crime.  
 They, all as glad as birds of joyous prime,  
 Thence lead her forth, about her dancing round,  
 25 Shouting and singing all a shepherd's rhyme;  
 And with green branches strewing all the ground,  
 Do worship her as queen with olive garland crown'd.

And all the way their merry pipes they sound,  
 That all the woods and doubled echoes ring;  
 30 And with their horned feet do wear the ground,  
 Leaping like wanton kids in pleasant spring;  
 So towards old Sylvanus they her bring,  
 Who with the noise awaked, cometh out."

*Faery Queen, b. i. c. vi.*

On the contrary, there is nothing either musical or natural in  
 35 the ordinary construction of language. It is a thing altogether

arbitrary and conventional. Neither in the sounds themselves, which are the voluntary signs of certain ideas, nor in their grammatical arrangements in common speech, is there any principle of natural imitation, or correspondence to the individual ideas, or to the tone of feeling with which they are conveyed to 5 others. The jerks, the breaks, the inequalities, and harshnesses of prose, are fatal to the flow of a poetical imagination, as a jolting road or a stumbling horse disturbs the reverie of an absent man. But poetry makes these odds all even. It is the music of language, answering to the music of the mind, 10 untying as it were "the secret soul of harmony." Wherever any object takes such a hold of the mind as to make us dwell upon it, and brood over it, melting the heart in tenderness, or kindling it to a sentiment of enthusiasm; — wherever a movement of imagination or passion is impressed on the 15 mind, by which it seeks to prolong and repeat the emotion, to bring all other objects into accord with it, and to give the same movement of harmony, sustained and continuous, or gradually varied according to the occasion, to the sounds that express it — this is poetry. The musical in sound is the 20 sustained and continuous; the musical in thought is the sustained and continuous also. There is a near connection between music and deep-rooted passion. Mad people sing. As often as articulation passes naturally into intonation, there poetry begins. Where one idea gives a tone and colour to others, where 25 one feeling melts others into it, there can be no reason why the same principle should not be extended to the sounds by which the voice utters these emotions of the soul, and blends syllables and lines into each other. It is to supply the inherent defect of harmony in the customary mechanism of language, to make the 30 sound an echo to the sense, when the sense becomes a sort of echo to itself — to mingle the tide of verse, "the golden cadences of poetry," with the tide of feeling, flowing and murmuring as it flows — in short, to take the language of the imagination from

off the ground, and enable it to spread its wings where it may indulge its own impulses —

“Sailing with supreme dominion  
Through the azure deep of air” —

5 without being stopped, or fretted, or diverted with the abruptnesses and petty obstacles, and discordant flats and sharps of prose, that poetry was invented. It is to common language, what springs are to a carriage, or wings to feet. In ordinary speech we arrive at a certain harmony by the modulations of  
10 the voice: in poetry the same thing is done systematically by a regular collocation of syllables. It has been well observed, that every one who declaims warmly, or grows intent upon a subject, rises into a sort of blank verse or measured prose. The merchant, as described in Chaucer, went on his way “sounding al-  
15 ways the increase of his winning.” Every prose-writer has more or less of rhythmical adaptation, except poets, who, when deprived of the regular mechanism of verse, seem to have no principle of modulation left in their writings.

An excuse might be made for rhyme in the same manner. It  
20 is but fair that the ear should linger on the sounds that delight it, or avail itself of the same brilliant coincidence and unexpected recurrence of syllables, that have been displayed in the invention and collocation of images. It is allowed that rhyme assists the memory; and a man of wit and shrewdness has been heard to  
25 say, that the only four good lines of poetry are the well-known ones which tell the number of days in the months of the year.

“Thirty days hath September,” &c.

But if the jingle of names assists the memory, may it not also quicken the fancy? and there are other things worth having at  
30 our finger’s ends, besides the contents of the almanac.—Pope’s versification is tiresome, from its excessive sweetness and uniformity. Shakspeare’s blank verse is the perfection of dramatic dialogue.

All is not poetry that passes for such : nor does verse make the whole difference between poetry and prose. The *Iliad* does not cease to be poetry in a literal translation ; and Addison's Campaign has been very properly denominated a Gazette in rhyme. Common prose differs from poetry, as treating for the most part either of such trite, familiar, and irksome matters of fact, as convey no extraordinary impulse to the imagination, or else of such difficult and laborious processes of the understanding, as do not admit of the wayward or violent movements either of the imagination or the passions. 10

I will mention three works which come as near to poetry as possible without absolutely being so, namely, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and the *Tales of Boccaccio*. Chaucer and Dryden have translated some of the last into English rhyme, but the essence and the power of poetry was there before. That which lifts the spirit above the earth, which draws the soul out of itself with indescribable longings, is poetry in kind, and generally fit to become so in name, by being "married to immortal verse." If it is of the essence of poetry to strike and fix the imagination, whether we will or no, to make the eye of childhood glisten with the starting tear, to be never thought of afterwards with indifference, John Bunyan and Daniel Defoe may be permitted to pass for poets in their way. The mixture of fancy and reality in the *Pilgrim's Progress* was never equalled in any allegory. His pilgrims walk above the earth, and yet are on it. What zeal, what beauty, what truth of fiction ! What deep feeling in the description of Christian's swimming across the water at last, and in the picture of the Shining Ones within the gates, with wings at their backs and garlands on their heads, who are to wipe all tears from his eyes ! The writer's genius, though not "dipped in dews of Castalie," was baptised with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The prints in this book are no small part of it. If the confinement of Philoctetes in the island of Lemnos was a subject for the most beautiful of all the 15 20 25 30

Greek tragedies, what shall we say to Robinson Crusoe in his? Take the speech of the Greek hero on leaving his cave, beautiful as it is, and compare it with the reflections of the English adventurer in his solitary place of confinement. The thoughts of  
 5 home, and of all from which he is for ever cut off, swell and press against his bosom, as the heaving ocean rolls its ceaseless tide against the rocky shore, and the very beatings of his heart become audible in the eternal silence that surrounds him. Thus he says,

- 10 "As I walked about, either in my hunting, or for viewing the country, the anguish of my soul at my condition would break out upon me on a sudden, and my very heart would die within me to think of the woods, the mountains, the deserts I was in; and how I was a prisoner, locked  
 15 up with the eternal bars and bolts of the ocean, in an uninhabited wilderness, without redemption. In the midst of the greatest composures of my mind, this would break out upon me like a storm, and make me wring my hands, and weep like a child. Sometimes it would take me in the middle of my work, and I would immediately sit down and sigh, and  
 20 look upon the ground for an hour or two together, and this was still worse to me, for if I could burst into tears or vent myself in words, it would go off, and the grief having exhausted itself would abate." P. 50.

The story of his adventures would not make a poem like the Odyssey, it is true; but the relator had the true genius of a poet. It has been made a question whether Richardson's ro-  
 25 mances are poetry; and the answer perhaps is, that they are not poetry, because they are not romance. The interest is worked up to an inconceivable height; but it is by an infinite number of little things, by incessant labour and calls upon the attention, by a repetition of blows that have no rebound in them.  
 30 The sympathy excited is not a voluntary contribution, but a tax. Nothing is unforced and spontaneous. There is a want of elasticity and motion. The story does not "give an echo to the seat where love is throned." The heart does not answer of itself like a chord in music. The fancy does not run on before the writer  
 35 with breathless expectation, but is dragged along with an infinite number of pins and wheels, like those with which the Lilliputians

dragged Gulliver pinioned to the royal palace. — Sir Charles Grandison is a coxcomb. What sort of a figure would he cut translated into an epic poem by the side of Achilles? Clarissa, the divine Clarissa, is too interesting by half. She is interesting in her ruffles, in her gloves, her samplers, her aunts and uncles 5 — she is interesting in all that is uninteresting. Such things, however intensely they may be brought home to us, are not conductors to the imagination. There is infinite truth and feeling in Richardson; but it is extracted from a *caput mortuum* of circumstances: it does not evaporate of itself. His poetical 10 genius is like Ariel confined in a pine-tree, and requires an artificial process to let it out. Shakespeare says —

“ Our poesy is as a gum,  
Which issues whence ’t is nourished, our gentle flame  
Provokes itself, and like the current flies  
Each bound it chafes.”<sup>1</sup> 15

I shall conclude this general account with some remarks on four of the principal works of poetry in the world, at different periods of history — Homer, the Bible, Dante, and let me add Ossian. In Homer, the principle of action or life is predominant; 20 in the Bible, the principle of faith and the idea of Providence; Dante is a personification of blind will; and in Ossian we see the decay of life, and the lag-end of the world. Homer’s poetry is the heroic: it is full of life and action; it is bright as the day, strong as a river. In the vigour of his intellect, he grapples 25 with all the objects of nature, and enters into all the relations of

<sup>1</sup> Burke’s writings are not poetry, notwithstanding the vividness of the fancy, because the subject matter is abstruse and dry, not natural, but artificial. The difference between poetry and eloquence is, that the one is the eloquence of the imagination, and the other of the understanding. Eloquence tries to persuade the will, and convince the reason: poetry produces its effect by instantaneous sympathy. Nothing is a subject for poetry that admits of a dispute. Poets are in general bad prose-writers, because their images, though fine in themselves, are not to the purpose, and do not carry on the argument. The French poetry wants the forms of the imagination. It is didactic more than dramatic. And some of our own poetry which has been most admired, is only poetry in the rhyme, and in the studied use of poetic diction.

social life. He saw many countries, and the manners of many men; and he has brought them all together in his poem. He describes his heroes going to battle with a prodigality of life, arising from an exuberance of animal spirits: we see them before us, their number, and their order of battle, poured out upon the plain "all plumed like ostriches, like eagles newly bathed, wanton as goats, wild as young bulls, youthful as May, and gorgeous as the sun at midsummer," covered with glittering armour, with dust and blood; while the gods quaff their nectar in golden cups, or mingle in the fray; and the old men assembled on the walls of Troy rise up with reverence as Helen passes by them. The multitude of things in Homer is wonderful; their splendour, their truth, their force, and variety. His poetry is, like his religion, the poetry of number and form: he describes the bodies as well as the souls of men.

The poetry of the Bible is that of imagination and of faith: it is abstract and disembodied: it is not the poetry of form, but of power; not of multitude, but of immensity. It does not divide into many, but aggrandizes into one. Its ideas of nature are like its ideas of God. It is not the poetry of social life, but of solitude: each man seems alone in the world, with the original forms of nature, the rocks, the earth, and the sky. It is not the poetry of action or heroic enterprise, but of faith in a supreme Providence, and resignation to the power that governs the universe. As the idea of God was removed farther from humanity, and a scattered polytheism, it became more profound and intense, as it became more universal, for the Infinite is present to everything: "If we fly into the uttermost parts of the earth, it is there also; if we turn to the east or the west, we cannot escape from it." Man is thus aggrandised in the image of his Maker. The history of the patriarchs is of this kind; they are founders of a chosen race of people, the inheritors of the earth; they exist in the generations which are to come after them. Their poetry, like their religious creed, is vast, unformed,

obscure and infinite ; a vision is upon it — an invisible hand is suspended over it. The spirit of the Christian religion consists in the glory hereafter to be revealed ; but in the Hebrew dispensation, Providence took an immediate share in the affairs of this life. Jacob's dream arose out of this intimate communion between 5 heaven and earth : it was this that let down, in the sight of the youthful patriarch, a golden ladder from the sky to the earth, with angels ascending and descending upon it, and shed a light upon the lonely place, which can never pass away. The story of Ruth, again, is as if all the depth of natural affection in the human race 10 was involved in her breast. There are descriptions in the book of Job more prodigal of imagery, more intense in passion, than any thing in Homer, as that of the state of his prosperity, and of the vision that came upon him by night. The metaphors in the Old Testament are more boldly figurative. Things were collected more 15 into masses, and gave a greater *momentum* to the imagination.

Dante was the father of modern poetry, and he may therefore claim a place in this connection. His poem is the first great step from Gothic darkness and barbarism ; and the struggle of thought in it to burst the thralldom in which the human mind had 20 been so long held, is felt in every page. He stood bewildered, not appalled, on that dark shore which separates the ancient and the modern world ; and saw the glories of antiquity dawning through the abyss of time, while revelation opened its passage to the other world. He was lost in wonder at what had 25 been done before him, and he dared to emulate it. Dante seems to have been indebted to the Bible for the gloomy tone of his mind, as well as for the prophetic fury which exalts and kindles his poetry ; but he is utterly unlike Homer. His genius is not a sparkling flame, but the sullen heat of a furnace. He is power, 30 passion, self-will personified. In all that relates to the descriptive or fanciful part of poetry, he bears no comparison to many who had gone before, or who have come after him ; but there is a gloomy abstraction in his conceptions, which lies like a dead

weight upon the mind ; a benumbing stupor, a breathless awe, from the intensity of the impression ; a terrible obscurity, like that which oppresses us in dreams ; an identity of interest, which moulds every object to its own purposes, and clothes all things  
5 with the passions and imaginations of the human soul,—that make amends for all other deficiencies. The immediate objects he presents to the mind, are not much in themselves, they want grandeur, beauty, and order ; but they become everything by the force of the character he impresses upon them. His mind  
10 lends its own power to the objects which it contemplates, instead of borrowing it from them. He takes advantage even of the nakedness and dreary vacuity of his subject. His imagination peoples the shades of death, and broods over the silent air. He is the severest of all writers, the most hard and impenetrable,  
15 the most opposite to the flowery and glittering ; who relies most on his own power, and the sense of it in others, and who leaves most room to the imagination of his readers. Dante's only endeavour is to interest ; and he interests by exciting our sympathy with the emotion by which he is himself possessed. He does  
20 not place before us the objects by which that emotion has been created ; but he seizes on the attention, by shewing us the effect they produce on his feelings ; and his poetry accordingly gives the same thrilling and overwhelming sensation, which is caught by gazing on the face of a person who has seen some object of horror.  
25 The improbability of the events, the abruptness and monotony in the *Inferno*, are excessive : but the interest never flags, from the continued earnestness of the author's mind. Dante's great power is in combining internal feelings with external objects. Thus the gate of hell, on which that withering inscription is  
30 written, seems to be endowed with speech and consciousness, and to utter its dread warning, not without a sense of mortal woes. This author habitually unites the absolutely local and individual with the greatest wildness and mysticism. In the midst of the obscure and shadowy regions of the lower world, a tomb

suddenly rises up with the inscription, "I am the tomb of Pope Anastasius the Sixth:" and half the personages whom he has crowded into the Inferno are his own acquaintance. All this, perhaps, tends to heighten the effect by the bold intermixture of realities, and by an appeal, as it were, to the individual knowl- 5 edge and experience of the reader. He affords few subjects for picture. There is, indeed, one gigantic one, that of Count Ugolino, of which Michael Angelo made a bas-relief, and which Sir Joshua Reynolds ought not to have painted.

Another writer whom I shall mention last, and whom I can- 10 not persuade myself to think a mere modern in the groundwork, is Ossian. He is a feeling and a name that can never be destroyed in the minds of his readers. As Homer is the first vigour and lustihed, Ossian is the decay and old age of poetry. He lives only in the recollection and regret of the past. There is 15 one impression which he conveys more entirely than all other poets, namely, the sense of privation, the loss of all things, of friends, of good name, of country—he is even without God in the world. He converses only with the spirits of the departed; with the motionless and silent clouds. The cold moonlight sheds 20 its faint lustre on his head; the fox peeps out of the ruined tower; the thistle waves its beard to the wandering gale; and the strings of his harp seem, as the hand of age, as the tale of other times, passes over them, to sigh and rustle like the dry reeds in the winter's wind! The feeling of cheerless desolation, of the 25 loss of the pith and sap of existence, of the annihilation of the substance, and the clinging to the shadow of all things as in a mock-embrace, is here perfect. In this way, the lamentation of Selma for the loss of Salgar is the finest of all. If it were indeed possible to shew that this writer was nothing, it would only 30 be another instance of mutability, another blank made, another void left in the heart, another confirmation of that feeling which makes him so often complain, "Roll on, ye dark brown years, ye bring no joy on your wing to Ossian!"

## ON ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

The age of Elizabeth was distinguished, beyond, perhaps, any other in our history, by a number of great men, famous in different ways, and whose names have come down to us with unblemished honours ; statesmen, warriors, divines, scholars, poets, 5 and philosophers ; Raleigh, Drake, Coke, Hooker, and higher and more sounding still, and still more frequent in our mouths, Shakespear, Spenser, Sidney, Bacon, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, men whom fame has eternised in her long and lasting scroll, and who, by their words and acts, were benefactors of 10 their country, and ornaments of human nature. Their attainments of different kinds bore the same general stamp, and it was sterling : what they did, had the mark of their age and country upon it. Perhaps the genius of Great Britain (if I may so speak without offence or flattery), never shone out fuller or brighter, or 15 looked more like itself, than at this period. Our writers and great men had something in them that savoured of the soil from which they grew : they were not French, they were not Dutch, or German, or Greek, or Latin ; they were truly English. They did not look out of themselves to see what they should be ; they sought 20 for truth and nature, and found it in themselves. There was no tinsel, and but little art ; they were not the spoilt children of affection and refinement, but a bold, vigorous, independent race of thinkers, with prodigious strength and energy, with none but natural grace, and heartfelt unobtrusive delicacy. They were not 25 at all sophisticated. The mind of their country was great in them, and it prevailed. With their learning and unexampled acquirement, they did not forget that they were men : with all their endeavours after excellence, they did not lay aside the strong original

bent and character of their minds. What they performed was chiefly nature's handy-work ; and time has claimed it for his own. — To these, however, might be added others not less learned, nor with a scarce less happy vein, but less fortunate in the event, who, though as renowned in their day, have sunk into "mere 5 oblivion," and of whom the only record (but that the noblest) is to be found in their works. Their works and their names, "poor, poor dumb names," are all that remains of such men as Webster, Decker, Marston, Marlow, Chapman, Heywood, Middleton, and Rowley ! "How lov'd, how honour'd once, avails 10 them not : " though they were the friends and fellow-labourers of Shakespear, sharing his fame and fortunes with him, the rivals of Jonson, and the masters of Beaumont and Fletcher's well-sung woes ! They went out one by one unnoticed, like evening lights ; or were swallowed up in the headlong torrent of puritanic zeal 15 which succeeded, and swept away everything in its unsparing course, throwing up the wrecks of taste and genius at random, and at long fitful intervals, amidst the painted gewgaws and foreign frippery of the reign of Charles II. and from which we are only now recovering the scattered fragments and broken 20 images to erect a temple to true Fame ! How long before it will be completed ?

If I can do anything to rescue some of these writers from hopeless obscurity, and to do them right, without prejudice to well-deserved reputation, I shall have succeeded in what I chiefly 25 propose. I shall not attempt, indeed, to adjust the spelling or restore the pointing, as if the genius of poetry lay hid in errors of the press, but leaving these weightier matters of criticism to those who are more able and willing to bear the burden, try to bring out their real beauties to the eager sight, "draw the cur- 30 tain of Time, and show the picture of Genius," restraining my own admiration within reasonable bounds !

There is not a lower ambition, a poorer way of thought, than that which would confine all excellence, or arrogate its final

accomplishment to the present or modern times. We ordinarily speak and think of those who had the misfortune to write or live before us, as labouring under very singular privations and disadvantages in not having the benefit of those improvements  
5 which we have made, as buried in the grossest ignorance, or the slaves "of poring pedantry;" and we make a cheap and infallible estimate of their progress in civilization upon a graduated scale of perfectibility, calculated from the meridian of our own times. If we have pretty well got rid of the narrow bigotry  
10 that would limit all sense or virtue to our own country, and have fraternized, like true cosmopolites, with our neighbours and contemporaries, we have made our self-love amends by letting the generation we live in engross nearly all our admiration and by pronouncing a sweeping sentence of barbarism and igno-  
15 rance on our ancestry backwards, from the commencement (as near as can be) of the nineteenth, or the latter end of the eighteenth century. From thence we date a new era, the dawn of our own intellect and that of the world, like "the sacred influence of light" glimmering on the confines of Chaos and old  
20 night; new manners rise, and all the cumbrous "pomp of elder days" vanishes, and is lost in worse than Gothic darkness. Pavilioned in the glittering pride of our superficial accomplishments and upstart pretensions, we fancy that everything beyond that magic circle is prejudice and error; and all, before the pres-  
25 ent enlightened period, but a dull and useless blank in the great map of time. We are so dazzled with the gloss and novelty of modern discoveries, that we cannot take into our mind's eye the vast expanse, the lengthened perspective of human intellect, and a cloud hangs over and conceals its loftiest monuments, if they  
30 are removed to a little distance from us—the cloud of our own vanity and short-sightedness. The modern sciolist *stultifies* all understanding but his own, and that which he conceives like his own. We think, in this age of reason and consummation of philosophy, because we knew nothing twenty or thirty years ago,

and began to think then for the first time in our lives, that the rest of mankind were in the same predicament, and never knew anything till we did ; that the world had grown old in sloth and ignorance, had dreamt out its long minority of five thousand years in a dozing state, and that it first began to wake out of sleep, to rouse itself, and look about it, startled by the light of our unexpected discoveries, and the noise we made about them. Strange error of our infatuated self-love ! Because the clothes we remember to have seen worn when we were children, are now out of fashion, and our grandmothers were then old women, we conceive with magnanimous continuity of reasoning, that it must have been much worse three hundred years before, and that grace, youth, and beauty are things of modern date — as if nature had ever been old, or the sun had first shone on our folly and presumption. Because, in a word, the last generation, when tottering off the stage, were not so active, so sprightly, and so promising as we were, we begin to imagine, that people formerly must have crawled about in a feeble, torpid state, like flies in winter, in a sort of dim twilight of the understanding ; “ nor can we think what thoughts they could conceive,” in the absence of all those topics that so agreeably enliven and diversify our conversation and literature, mistaking the imperfection of our knowledge for the defect of their organs, as if it was necessary for us to have a register and certificate of their thoughts, or as if, because they did not see with our eyes, hear with our ears, and understand with our understandings, they could hear, see, and understand nothing. A falser inference could not be drawn, nor one more contrary to the maxims and cautions of a wise humanity. “ Think,” says Shakespear, the prompter of good and true feelings, “ there ’s livers out of Britain.” So there have been thinkers, and great and sound ones, before our time. They had the same capacities that we have, sometimes greater motives for their exertion, and, for the most part, the same subject-matter to work upon. What we learn from nature, we may

hope to do as well as they ; what we learn from them, we may in general expect to do worse. — What is, I think, as likely as anything to cure us of this overweening admiration of the present, and unmingled contempt for past times, is the looking at the  
5 finest old pictures ; at Raphael's heads, at Titian's faces, at Claude's landscapes. We have there the evidence of the senses, without the alterations of opinion or disguise of language. We there see the blood circulate through the veins (long before it was known that it did so), the same red and white " by nature's  
10 own sweet and cunning hand laid on," the same thoughts passing through the mind and seated on the lips, the same blue sky, and glittering sunny vales, " where Pan, knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance, leads on the eternal spring." And we begin to feel, that nature and the mind of man are not a thing  
15 of yesterday, as we had been led to suppose ; and that " there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy." — Or grant that we improve, in some respects, in a uniformly progressive ratio, and build, Babel-high, on the foundation of other men's knowledge, as in matters of science and  
20 and speculative inquiry, where by going often over the same general ground, certain general conclusions have been arrived at, and in the number of persons reasoning on a given subject, truth has at last been hit upon and long-established error exploded ; yet this does not apply to cases of individual power and knowl-  
25 edge, to a million of things beside, in which we are still to seek as much as ever, and in which we can only hope to find, by going to the fountain-head of thought and experience. We are quite wrong in supposing (as we are apt to do), that we can plead an exclusive title to wit and wisdom, to taste and genius,  
30 as the net produce and clear reversion of the age we live in, and that all we have to do to be great, is to despise those who have gone before us as nothing.

Or even if we admit a saving clause in this sweeping proscription, and do not make the rule absolute, the very

nature of the exceptions shows the spirit in which they are made. We single out one or two striking instances, say Shakespear or Lord Bacon, which we would fain treat as prodigies, and as a marked contrast to the rudeness and barbarism that surrounded them. These we delight to dwell upon and magnify ; the praise 5 and wonder we heap upon their shrines, are at the expense of the time in which they lived, and would leave it poor indeed. We make them out something more than human, "matchless, divine, what we will," so to make them no rule for their age, and no infringement of the abstract claim to superiority which 10 we set up. Instead of letting them reflect any lustre, or add any credit to the period of history to which they rightfully belong, we only make use of their example to insult and degrade it still more beneath our own level.

It is the present fashion to speak with veneration of old 15 English literature ; but the homage we pay to it is more akin to the rites of superstition, than the worship of true religion. Our faith is doubtful ; our love cold ; our knowledge little or none. We now and then repeat the names of some of the old writers by rote ; but we are shy of looking into their works. Though 20 we seem disposed to think highly of them, and to give them every credit for a masculine and original vein of thought, as a matter of literary courtesy and enlargement of taste, we are afraid of coming to the proof, as too great a trial of our candour and patience. We regard the enthusiastic admiration of 25 these obsolete authors, or a desire to make proselytes to a belief in their extraordinary merits, as an amiable weakness, a pleasing delusion ; and prepare to listen to some favourite passage, that may be referred to in support of this singular taste, with an incredulous smile ; and are in no small pain for the re- 30 sult of the hazardous experiment ; feeling much the same awkward condescending disposition to patronise these first crude attempts at poetry and lisplings of the Muse, as when a fond parent brings forward a bashful child to make a display of its wit

or learning. We hope the best, put a good face on the matter, but are sadly afraid the thing cannot answer. — Dr. Johnson said of these writers generally, that “ they were sought after because they were scarce, and would not have been scarce, had they been  
5 much esteemed.” His decision is neither true history nor sound criticism. They were esteemed, and they deserved to be so.

One cause that might be pointed out here, as having contributed to the long-continued neglect of our earlier writers, lies in the very nature of our academic institutions, which unavoidably  
10 neutralizes a taste for the productions of native genius, estranges the mind from the history of our own literature, and makes it in each successive age like a book sealed. The Greek and Roman classics are a sort of privileged text-books, the standing order of the day, in a university education, and leave little leisure for  
15 a competent acquaintance with, or due admiration of, a whole host of able writers of our own, who are suffered to moulder in obscurity on the shelves of our libraries, with a decent reservation of one or two top-names, that are cried up for form’s sake, and to save the national character. Thus we keep a few of these  
20 always ready in capitals, and strike off the rest, to prevent the tendency to a superfluous population in the republic of letters ; in other words, to prevent the writers from becoming more numerous than the readers. The ancients are become effete in this respect, they no longer increase and multiply ; or if they  
25 have imitators among us, no one is expected to read, and still less to admire them. It is not possible that the learned professors and the reading public should clash in this way, or necessary for them to use any precautions against each other. But it is not the same with the living languages, where there  
30 is danger of being overwhelmed by the crowd of competitors ; and pedantry has combined with ignorance to cancel their unsatisfied claims.

We affect to wonder at Shakespear and one or two more of that period, as solitary instances upon record ; whereas it is our

own dearth of information that makes the waste ; for there is no time more populous of intellect, or more prolific of intellectual wealth, than the one we are speaking of. Shakespear did not look upon himself in this light, as a sort of monster of poetical genius, or on his contemporaries as "less than the smallest 5 dwarfs," when he speaks with true, not false modesty, of himself and them, and of his wayward thoughts, "desiring this man's art, and that man's scope." We fancy that there were no such men, that could either add to or take any thing away from him, but such there were. He indeed overlooks and 10 commands the admiration of posterity, but he does it from the *tableland* of the age in which he lived. He towered above his fellows, "in shape and gesture proudly eminent ;" but he was one of a race of giants, the tallest, the strongest, the most graceful, and beautiful of them ; but it was a common and a 15 noble brood. He was not something sacred and aloof from the vulgar herd of men, but shook hands with nature and the circumstances of the time, and is distinguished from his immediate contemporaries, not in kind, but in degree and greater variety of excellence. He did not form a class or species by himself, 20 but belonged to a class or species. His age was necessary to him ; nor could he have been wrenched from his place in the edifice of which he was so conspicuous a part, without equal injury to himself and it. Mr. Wordsworth says of Milton, that "his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." This cannot be 25 said with any propriety of Shakespear, who certainly moved in a constellation of bright luminaries, and "drew after him a third part of the heavens." If we allow, for argument's sake (or for truth's, which is better), that he was in himself equal to all his competitors put together ; yet there was more dramatic 30 excellence in that age than in the whole of the period that has elapsed since. If his contemporaries, with their united strength, would hardly make one Shakespear, certain it is that all his successors would not make half a one. With the exception of a

single writer, Otway, and of a single play of his (Venice Preserved), there is nobody in tragedy and dramatic poetry (I do not here speak of comedy) to be compared to the great men of the age of Shakespear, and immediately after. They are a mighty  
15 phalanx of kindred spirits closing him round, moving in the same orbit, and impelled by the same causes in their whirling and eccentric career. They had the same faults and the same excellences; the same strength and depth and richness, the same truth of character, passion, imagination, thought and language,  
10 thrown, heaped, massed together without careful polishing or exact method, but poured out in unconcerned profusion from the lap of nature and genius in boundless and unrivalled magnificence. The sweetness of Dekker, the thought of Marston, the gravity of Chapman, the grace of Fletcher and his young-  
15 eyed wit, Jonson's learned sock, the flowing vein of Middleton, Heywood's ease, the pathos of Webster, and Marlow's deep designs, add a double lustre to the sweetness, thought, gravity, grace, wit, artless nature, copiousness, ease, pathos, and sublime conceptions of Shakespear's Muse. They are indeed the scale  
20 by which we can best ascend to the true knowledge and love of him. Our admiration of them does not lessen our relish for him: but, on the contrary, increases and confirms it. — For such an extraordinary combination and development of fancy and genius many causes may be assigned; and we may seek for the chief of  
25 them in religion, in politics, in the circumstances of the time, the recent diffusion of letters, in local situation, and in the character of the men who adorned that period, and availed themselves so nobly of the advantages placed within their reach.

I shall here attempt to give a general sketch of these causes,  
30 and of the manner in which they operated to mould and stamp the poetry of the country at the period of which I have to treat; independently of incidental and fortuitous causes, for which there is no accounting, but which, after all, have often the greatest share in determining the most important results.

The first cause I shall mention, as contributing to this general effect, was the Reformation, which had just then taken place. This event gave a mighty impulse and increased activity to thought and inquiry, and agitated the inert mass of accumulated prejudices throughout Europe. The effect of the concussion was general; but the shock was greatest in this country. It toppled down the full-grown, intolerable abuses of centuries at a blow; heaved the ground from under the feet of bigoted faith and slavish obedience; and the roar and dashing of opinions, loosened from their accustomed hold, might be heard like the noise of an angry sea, and has never yet subsided. Germany first broke the spell of misbegotten fear, and gave the watchword; but England joined the shout, and echoed it back with her island voice, from her thousand cliffs and craggy shores, in a longer and a louder strain. With that cry, the genius of Great Britain rose, and threw down the gauntlet to the nations. There was a mighty fermentation: the waters were out; public opinion was in a state of projection. Liberty was held out to all to think and speak the truth. Men's brains were busy; their spirits stirring; their hearts full; and their hands not idle. Their eyes were opened to expect the greatest things, and their ears burned with curiosity and zeal to know the truth, that the truth might make them free. The death-blow which had been struck at scarlet vice and bloated hypocrisy, loosened their tongues, and made the talismans and love-tokens of Popish superstition, with which she had beguiled her followers and committed abominations with the people, fall harmless from their necks.

The translation of the Bible was the chief engine in the great work. It threw open, by a secret spring, the rich treasures of religion and morality, which had been there locked up as in a shrine. It revealed the visions of the prophets, and conveyed the lessons of inspired teachers (such they were thought) to the meanest of the people. It gave them a common interest in the common cause. Their hearts burnt within them as they read. It

gave a *mind* to the people, by giving them common subjects of thought and feeling. It cemented their union of character and sentiment: it created endless diversity and collision of opinion. They found objects to employ their faculties, and a motive in  
5 the magnitude of the consequences attached to them, to exert the utmost eagerness in the pursuit of truth, and the most daring intrepidity in maintaining it. Religious controversy sharpens the understanding by the subtlety and remoteness of the topics it discusses, and braces the will by their infinite importance. We per-  
10 ceive in the history of this period a nervous masculine intellect. No levity, no feebleness, no indifference; or if there were, it is a relaxation from the intense activity which gives a tone to its general character. But there is a gravity approaching to piety; a seriousness of impression, a conscientious severity of argu-  
15 ment, an habitual fervour and enthusiasm in their mode of handling almost every subject. The debates of the schoolmen were sharp and subtle enough; but they wanted interest and grandeur, and were besides confined to a few: they did not affect the general mass of the community. But the Bible was  
20 thrown open to all ranks and conditions "to run and read," with its wonderful table of contents from Genesis to the Revelations. Every village in England would present the scene so well described in Burns's *Cotter's Saturday Night*. I cannot think that all this variety and weight of knowledge could be  
25 thrown in all at once upon the mind of a people, and not make some impression upon it, the traces of which might be discerned in the manners and literature of the age. For to leave more disputable points, and take only the historical parts of the Old Testament, or the moral sentiments of the New, there is nothing  
30 like them in the power of exciting awe and admiration, or of riveting sympathy. We see what Milton has made of the account of the Creation, from the manner in which he has treated it, imbued and impregnated with the spirit of the time of which we speak. Or what is there equal (in that romantic interest and

patriarchal simplicity which goes to the heart of a country, and rouses it, as it were, from its lair in wastes and wildernesses) to the story of Joseph and his Brethren, of Rachael and Laban, of Jacob's Dream, of Ruth and Boaz, the descriptions in the book of Job, the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt, or the 5 account of their captivity and return from Babylon? There is in all these parts of the Scripture, and numberless more of the same kind, to pass over the Orphic hymns of David, the prophetic denunciations of Isaiah, or the gorgeous visions of Ezekiel, an originality, a vastness of conception, a depth and tenderness 10 of feeling, and a touching simplicity in the mode of narration, which he who does not feel, need be made of no "penetrable stuff." There is something in the character of Christ too (leaving religious faith quite out of the question) of more sweetness and majesty, and more likely to work a change in 15 the mind of man, by the contemplation of its idea alone, than any to be found in history, whether actual or feigned. This character is that of a sublime humanity, such as was never seen on earth 'before, nor since. This shone manifestly both in his words and actions. We see it in his washing the disciples' feet 20 the night before his death, that unspeakable instance of humility and love, above all art, all meanness, and all pride, and in the leave he took of them on that occasion, "My peace I give unto you, that peace which the world cannot give, give I unto you;" and in his last commandment, that "they should love 25 one another." Who can read the account of his behaviour on the cross, when turning to his mother he said, "Woman, behold thy son," and to the disciple John, "Behold thy mother," and "from that hour that disciple took her to his own home," without having his heart smote within him! We see it in his 30 treatment of the woman taken in adultery, and in his excuse for the woman who poured precious ointment on his garment as an offering of devotion and love, which is here all in all. His religion was the religion of the heart. We see it in his discourse with

the disciples as they walked together towards Emmaus, when their hearts burned within them; in his sermon from the Mount, in his parable of the good Samaritan, and in that of the Prodigal Son—in every act and word of his life, a grace, a mildness, a dignity and love, a patience and wisdom worthy of the Son of God. His whole life and being were imbued, steeped in this word, *charity*; it was the spring, the well-head from which every thought and feeling gushed into act; and it was this that breathed a mild glory from his face in that last agony upon the cross," when the meek Saviour bowed his head and died," praying for his enemies. He was the first true teacher of morality; for he alone conceived the idea of a pure humanity. He redeemed man from the worship of that idol, self, and instructed him by precept and example to love his neighbour as himself, to forgive our enemies, to do good to those that curse us and spitefully use us. He taught the love of good for the sake of good, without regard to personal or sinister views, and made the affections of the heart the sole seat of morality, instead of the pride of the understanding or the sternness of the will. In answering the question, "Who is our neighbour?" as one who stands in need of our assistance, and whose wounds we can bind up, he has done more to humanize the thoughts and tame the unruly passions, than all who have tried to reform and benefit mankind. The very idea of abstract benevolence, of the desire to do good because another wants our services, and of regarding the human race as one family, the offspring of one common parent, is hardly to be found in any other code or system. It was "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The Greeks and Romans never thought of considering others, but as they were Greeks or Romans, as they were bound to them by certain positive ties, or, on the other hand, as separated from them by fiercer antipathies. Their virtues were the virtues of political machines, their vices were the vices of demons, ready to inflict or to endure pain

with obdurate and remorseless inflexibility of purpose. But in the Christian religion, "we perceive a softness coming over the heart of a nation, and the iron scales that fence and harden it, melt and drop off." It becomes malleable, capable of pity, of forgiveness, of relaxing in its claims, and remitting its power. 5 We strike it, and it does not hurt us: it is not steel or marble, but flesh and blood, clay tempered with tears, and "soft as sinews of the new-born babe." The gospel was first preached to the poor, for it consulted their wants and interests, not its own pride and arrogance. It first promulgated the equality 10 of mankind in the community of duties and benefits. It denounced the iniquities of the chief Priests and Pharisees, and declared itself at variance with principalities and powers, for it sympathizes not with the oppressor, but the oppressed. It first abolished slavery, for it did not consider the power of 15 the will to inflict injury, as clothing it with a right to do so. Its law is good, not power. It at the same time tended to wean the mind from the grossness of sense, and a particle of its divine flame was lent to brighten and purify the lamp of love!

There have been persons who, being sceptics as to the divine 20 mission of Christ, having taken an unaccountable prejudice to his doctrines, and have been disposed to deny the merit of his character; but this was not the feeling of the great men in the age of Elizabeth (whatever might be their belief) one of whom says of him, with a boldness equal to its piety: 25

"The best of men  
That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer;  
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;  
The first true gentleman that ever breathed."

This was old honest Decker, and the lines ought to embalm 30 his memory to every one who has a sense either of religion, or philosophy, or humanity, or true genius. Nor can I help thinking, that we may discern the traces of the influence exerted by religious faith in the spirit of the poetry of the age of Elizabeth,

in the means of exciting terror and pity, in the delineation of the passions of grief, remorse, love, sympathy, the sense of shame, in the fond desires, the longings after immortality, in the heaven of hope and the abyss of despair it lays open to us.<sup>1</sup>

5 The literature of this age, then, I would say, was strongly influenced (among other causes), first by the spirit of Christianity, and secondly by the spirit of Protestantism.

The effects of the Reformation on politics and philosophy may be seen in the writings and history of the next and of the  
10 following ages. They are still at work, and will continue to be so. The effects on the poetry of the time were chiefly confined to the moulding of the character, and giving a powerful impulse to the intellect of the country. The immediate use or application that was made of religion to subjects of imagination and fiction  
15 was not (from an obvious ground of separation) so direct or frequent, as that which was made of the classical and romantic literature.

For much about the same time, the rich and fascinating stores of the Greek and Roman mythology, and those of the romantic  
20 poetry of Spain and Italy, were eagerly explored by the curious, and thrown open in translations to the admiring gaze of the vulgar. This last circumstance could hardly have afforded so much advantage to the poets of that day, who were themselves, in fact, the translators, as it shews the general curiosity and in-  
25 creasing interest in such subjects as a prevailing feature of the times. There were translations of Tasso by Fairfax, and of Ariosto by Harrington, of Homer and Hesiod by Chapman, and of Virgil long before, and Ovid soon after; there was Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch, of which Shakespear  
30 has made such admirable use in his Coriolanus and Julius Cæsar; and Ben Jonson's tragedies of Catiline and Sejanus may themselves be considered as almost literal translations

<sup>1</sup> In some Roman Catholic countries, pictures in part supplied the place of the translation of the Bible: and this dumb art arose in the silence of the written oracles.

into verse of Tacitus, Sallust, and Cicero's Orations in his consulship. Boccaccio, the divine Boccaccio, Petrarch, Dante, the satirist Aretine, Machiavel, Castiglione, and others were familiar to our writers, and they make occasional mention of some few French authors, as Ronsard and Du Bartas ; for the French 5 literature had not at this stage arrived at its Augustan period, and it was the imitation of their literature a century afterwards, when it had arrived at its greatest height (itself copied from the Greek and Latin), that enfeebled and impoverished our own. But of the time that we are considering, it might be said, with- 10 out much extravagance, that every breath that blew, that every wave that rolled to our shores, brought with it some accession to our knowledge, which was engrafted on the national genius. In fact, all the disposeable materials that had been accumulating for a long period of time, either in our own or in foreign coun- 15 tries, were now brought together, and required nothing more than to be wrought up, polished, or arranged in striking forms, for ornament and use. To this every inducement prompted, the novelty of the acquisition of knowledge in many cases, the emulation of foreign wits and of immortal works, the want and 20 the expectation of such works among ourselves, the opportunity and encouragement afforded for their production by leisure and affluence ; and, above all, the insatiable desire of the mind to beget its own image, and to construct out of itself, and for the delight and admiration of the world and posterity, that excel- 25 lence of which the idea exists hitherto only in its own breast, and the impression of which it would make as universal as the eye of heaven, the benefit as common as the air we breathe. The first impulse of genius is to create what never existed before : the contemplation of that which is so created is sufficient 30 to satisfy the demands of taste ; and it is the habitual study and imitation of the original models that takes away the power, and even wish to do the like. Taste limps after genius, and from copying the artificial models we lose sight of the living principle

of nature. It is the effort we make, and the impulse we acquire, in overcoming the first obstacles, that projects us forward ; it is the necessity for exertion that makes us conscious of our strength ; but this necessity and this impulse once removed, the  
 15 tide of fancy and enthusiasm, which is at first a running stream, soon settles and crusts into the standing pool of dulness, criticism, and *virtù*.

What also gave an unusual *impetus* to the mind of man at this period was the discovery of the New World, and the reading  
 10 of voyages and travels. Green islands and golden sands seemed to arise, as by enchantment, out of the bosom of the watery waste, and invite the cupidity or wing the imagination of the dreaming speculator. Fairyland was realized in new and unknown worlds. "Fortunate fields and groves and flowery vales,  
 15 thrice happy isles," were found floating, "like those Hesperian gardens famed of old," beyond Atlantic seas, as dropped from the zenith. The people, the soil, the clime, everything gave unlimited scope to the curiosity of the traveller and reader. Other manners might be said to enlarge the bounds of knowledge, and  
 20 new mines of wealth were tumbled at our feet. It is from a voyage to the Straits of Magellan that Shakespear has taken the hint of Prospero's Enchanted Island, and of the savage Caliban with his god Setebos.<sup>1</sup> Spenser seems to have had the same feeling in his mind in the production of his Faery Queen,  
 25 and vindicates his poetic fiction on this very ground of analogy.

"Right well I wote, most mighty sovereign,  
 That all this famous antique history  
 Of some the abundance of an idle brain  
 Will judged be, and painted forgery,  
 30 Rather than matter of just memory :  
 Since none that breatheth living air, doth know  
 Where is that happy land of faery  
 Which I so much do vaunt, but nowhere show,  
 But vouch antiquities, which nobody can know.

<sup>1</sup> See a Voyage to the Straits of Magellan, 1594.

But let that man with better sense advise,  
 That of the world least part to us is read :  
 And daily how through hardy enterprize  
 Many great regions are discovered,  
 Which to late age were never mentioned. 5  
 Who ever heard of th' Indian Peru ?  
 Or who in venturous vessel measured  
 The Amazons' huge river, now found true ?  
 Or fruitfullest Virginia who did ever view ?

Yet all these were when no man did them know, 10  
 Yet have from wisest ages hidden been :  
 And later times things more unknown shall show.  
 Why then should witless man so much misween  
 That nothing is but that which he hath seen ?  
 What if within the moon's fair shining sphere, 15  
 What if in every other star unseen,  
 Of other worlds he happily should hear,  
 He wonder would much more ; yet such to some appear."

Fancy's air-drawn pictures after history's waking dream  
 shewed like clouds over mountains : and from the romance of 20  
 real life to the idlest fiction, the transition seemed easy. Shake-  
 spear, as well as others of his time, availed himself of the old  
 Chronicles, and of the traditions or fabulous inventions contained  
 in them in such ample measure, and which had not yet been  
 appropriated to the purposes of poetry or the drama. The stage 25  
 was a new thing ; and those who had to supply its demands laid  
 their hands upon whatever came within their reach : they were  
 not particular as to the means, so that they gained the end.  
 Lear is founded on an old ballad ; Othello on an Italian novel ;  
 Hamlet on a Danish, and Macbeth on a Scotch tradition : one 30  
 of which is to be found in Saxo-Grammaticus, and the last in  
 Hollingshed. The Ghost-scenes and the Witches in each, are  
 authenticated in the old Gothic history. There was also this  
 connecting link between the poetry of this age and the super-  
 natural traditions of a former one, that the belief in them was 35  
 still extant, and in full force and visible operation among the

vulgar (to say no more) in the time of our authors. The appalling and wild chimeras of superstition and ignorance, "those bodiless creations ecstasy is very cunning in," were inwoven with existing manners and opinions, and all their effects on the passions and terror or pity might be gathered from common and actual observation — might be discerned in the workings of the face, the expressions of the tongue, the writhings of a troubled conscience. "Your face, my Thane, is as a book where men may read strange matters." Midnight and secret murders too, from the imperfect state of the police, were more common; and the ferocious and brutal manners that would stamp the brow of the hardened ruffian or hired assassin, more incorrigible and undisguised. The portraits of Tyrrel and Forrest were, no doubt, done from the life. We find that the ravages of the plague, the destructive rage of fire, the poisoned chalice, lean famine, the serpent's mortal sting, and the fury of wild beasts, were the common topics of their poetry, as they were common occurrences in more remote periods of history. They were the strong ingredients thrown into the cauldron of tragedy, to make it "thick and slab." Man's life was (as it appears to me) more full of traps and pitfalls; of hair-breadth accidents by flood and field; more way-laid by sudden and startling evils; it trod on the brink of hope and fear; stumbled upon fate unawares; while the imagination, close behind it, caught at and clung to the shape of danger, or "snatched a wild and fearful joy from its escape." The accidents of nature were less provided against; the excesses of the passions and of lawless power were less regulated, and produced more strange and desperate catastrophes. The tales of Boccaccio are founded on the great pestilence of Florence, Fletcher the poet died of the plague, and Marlow was stabbed in a tavern quarrel. The strict authority of parents, the inequality of ranks, or the hereditary feuds between different families, made more unhappy loves or matches.

"The course of true love never did run even."

Again, the heroic and martial spirit which breathes in our elder writers, was yet in considerable activity in the reign of Elizabeth. "The age of chivalry was not then quite gone, nor the glory of Europe extinguished for ever." Jousts and tournaments were still common with the nobility in England and in 5 foreign countries: Sir Philip Sidney was particularly distinguished for his proficiency in these exercises (and indeed fell a martyr to his ambition as a soldier)—and the gentle Surrey was still more famous, on the same account, just before him. It is true, the general use of firearms gradually superseded the 10 necessity of skill in the sword, or bravery in the person: and as a symptom of the rapid degeneracy in this respect, we find Sir John Suckling soon after boasting of himself as one —

"Who prized black eyes, and a lucky hit  
At bowls, above all the trophies of wit."

15

It was comparatively an age of peace,

"Like strength reposing on his own right arm;"

but the sound of civil combat might still be heard in the distance, the spear glittered to the eye of memory, or the clashing of armour struck on the imagination of the ardent and the young. 20 They were borderers on the savage state, on the times of war and bigotry, though in the lap of arts, of luxury, and knowledge. They stood on the shore and saw the billows rolling after the storm: "they heard the tumult, and were still." The manners and out-of-door amusements were more tintured with a spirit 25 of adventure and romance. The war with wild beasts, &c., was more strenuously kept up in country sports. I do not think we could get from sedentary poets, who had never mingled in the vicissitudes, the dangers, or excitements of the chase, such descriptions of hunting and other athletic games, as are to be 30 found in Shakespear's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or Fletcher's *Noble Kinsmen*.

With respect to the good cheer and hospitable living of those times, I cannot agree with an ingenious and agreeable writer of the present day, that it was general or frequent. The very stress laid upon certain holidays and festivals, shews that they did not  
 5 keep up the same Saturnalian licence and open house all the year round. They reserved themselves for great occasions, and made the best amends they could, for a year of abstinence and toil by a week of merriment and convivial indulgence. Persons in middle life at this day, who can afford a good dinner every  
 10 day, do not look forward to it as any particular subject of exultation: the poor peasant, who can only contrive to treat himself to a joint of meat on a Sunday, considers it as an event in the week. So, in the old Cambridge comedy of the *Returne from Parnassus*, we find this indignant description of the progress of  
 15 luxury in those days, put into the mouth of one of the speakers.

" Why is't not strange to see a ragged clerke,  
 Some stammell weaver, or some butcher's sonne,  
 That scrubb'd a late within a sleeveless gowne,  
 When the commencement, like a morrice dance,  
 20 Hath put a bell or two about his legges,  
 Created him a sweet cleane gentleman:  
 How then he 'gins to follow fashions.  
 He whose thin sire dwelt in a smokye rooffe,  
 Must take tobacco, and must wear a locke,  
 25 His thirsty dad drinckes in a wooden bowle,  
 But his sweet self is served in silver plate.  
 His hungry sire will scrape you twenty legges  
 For one good Christmas meal on new year's day,  
 But his mawe must be capon cramm'd each day."

Act III. Scene 2

30 This does not look as if in those days "it snowed of meat and drink," as a matter of course, throughout the year! — The distinctions of dress, the badges of different professions, the very signs of the shops, which we have set aside for written inscriptions over the doors, were, as Mr. Lamb observes, a sort of  
 35 visible language to the imagination, and hints for thought. Like

the costume of different foreign nations, they had an immediate striking and picturesque effect, giving scope to the fancy. The surface of society was embossed with hieroglyphics, and poetry existed "in act and complement extern." The poetry of former times might be directly taken from real life, as our poetry is taken 5 from the poetry of former times. Finally, the face of nature, which was the same glorious object then that it is now, was open to them; and coming first, they gathered her fairest flowers to live for ever in their verse: — the movements of the human heart were not hid from them, for they had the same passions 10 as we, only less disguised, and less subject to controul. Decker has given an admirable description of a mad-house in one of his plays. But it might be perhaps objected, that it was only a literal account taken from Bedlam at that time: and it might be answered, that the old poets took the same method of describ- 15 ing the passions and fancies of men whom they met at large, which forms the point of communion between us: for the title of the old play, "A Mad World, my Masters," is hardly yet obsolete; and we are pretty much the same Bedlam still, perhaps a little better managed, like the real one, and with more care 20 and humanity shewn to the patients!

Lastly, to conclude this account; What gave a unity and common direction to all these causes, was the natural genius of the country, which was strong in these writers in proportion to their strength. We are a nation of islanders, and we cannot 25 help it; nor mend ourselves if we would. We are something in ourselves, nothing when we try to ape others. Music and painting are not our *forte*; for what we have done in that way has been little, and that borrowed from others with great difficulty. But we may boast of our poets and philosophers. That's 30 something. We have had strong heads and sound hearts among us. Thrown on one side of the world, and left to bustle for ourselves, we have fought out many a battle for truth and freedom. That is our natural style; and it were to be wished we had in

no instance departed from it. Our situation has given us a certain cast of thought and character, and our liberty has enabled us to make the most of it. We are of a stiff clay, not moulded into every fashion, with stubborn joints not easily bent. We are  
5 slow to think, and therefore impressions do not work upon us till they act in masses. We are not forward to express our feelings, and therefore they do not come from us till they force their way in the most impetuous eloquence. Our language is, as it were, to begin anew, and we make use of the most singular and boldest combinations to explain ourselves. Our wit  
10 comes from us, "like birdlime, brains and all." We pay too little attention to form and method, leave our works in an unfinished state, but still the materials we work in are solid and of nature's mint; we do not deal in counterfeits. We both under and over-  
15 do, but we keep an eye to the prominent features, the main chance. We are more for weight than show; care only about what interests ourselves, instead of trying to impose upon others by plausible appearances, and are obstinate and intractable in not conforming to common rules, by which many arrive  
20 at their ends with half the real waste of thought and trouble. We neglect all but the principal object, gather our force to make a great blow, bring it down, and relapse into sluggishness and indifference again. *Materiam superabat opus*, cannot be said of us. We may be accused of grossness, but not of flimsi-  
25 ness; of extravagance, but not of affectation; of want of art and refinement, but not of a want of truth and nature. Our literature, in a word, is Gothic and grotesque; unequal and irregular; not cast in a previous mould, nor of one uniform texture, but of great weight in the whole, and of incomparable value in the  
30 best parts. It aims at an excess of beauty or power, hits or misses, and is either very good indeed, or absolutely good for nothing. This character applies in particular to our literature in the age of Elizabeth, which is its best period, before the introduction of a rage for French rules and French models; for

whatever may be the value of our own original style of composition, there can be neither offence nor presumption in saying, that it is at least better than our second-hand imitations of others. Our understanding (such as it is, and must remain to be good for any thing) is not a thoroughfare for common places, 5 smooth as the palm of one's hand, but full of knotty points and jutting excrescences, rough, uneven, overgrown with brambles; and I like this aspect of the mind (as some one said of the country), where nature keeps a good deal of the soil in her own hands. Perhaps the genius of our poetry has more of Pan than 10 of Apollo; "but Pan is a God, Apollo is no more!"

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## ON THE PLEASURE OF PAINTING

"There is a pleasure in painting which none but painters know." In writing, you have to contend with the world; in painting, you have only to carry on a friendly strife with Nature. You sit down to your task, and are happy. From the moment  
5 that you take up the pencil, and look Nature in the face, you are at peace with your own heart. No angry passions rise to disturb the silent progress of the work, to shake the hand, or dim the brow: no irritable humours are set afloat: you have no absurd opinions to combat, no point to strain, no adversary to  
10 crush, no fool to annoy — you are actuated by fear or favour to no man. There is "no juggling here," no sophistry, no intrigue, no tampering with the evidence, no attempt to make black white, or white black: but you resign yourself into the hands of a greater power, that of Nature, with the simplicity of a child, and  
15 the devotion of an enthusiast — "study with joy her manner, and with rapture taste her style." The mind is calm, and full at the same time. The hand and eye are equally employed. In tracing the commonest object, a plant or the stump of a tree, you learn something every moment. You perceive unexpected  
20 differences, and discover likenesses where you looked for no such thing. You try to set down what you see — find out your error, and correct it. You need not play tricks, or purposely mistake: with all your pains, you are still far short of the mark. Patience grows out of the endless pursuit, and turns it into a luxury. A  
25 streak in a flower, a wrinkle in a leaf, a tinge in a cloud, a stain in an old wall or ruin grey, are seized with avidity as the *spolia opima* of this sort of mental warfare, and furnish out labour for another half-day. The hours pass away untold, without chagrin,

and without weariness ; nor would you ever wish to pass them otherwise. Innocence is joined with industry, pleasure with business ; and the mind is satisfied, though it is not engaged in thinking or in doing any mischief.<sup>1</sup>

I have not much pleasure in writing these Essays, or in read- 5  
ing them afterwards ; though I own I now and then meet with  
a phrase that I like, or a thought that strikes me as a true one.  
But after I begin them, I am only anxious to get to the end of  
them, which I am not sure I shall do, for I seldom see my way  
a page or even a sentence beforehand ; and when I have as by 10  
a miracle escaped, I trouble myself little more about them. I  
sometimes have to write them twice over : then it is necessary  
to read the *proof*, to prevent mistakes by the printer ; so that by  
the time they appear in a tangible shape, and one can con them  
over with a conscious, sidelong glance to the public approbation, 15  
they have lost their gloss and relish, and become " more tedious  
than a twice-told tale." For a person to read his own works over  
with any great delight, he ought first to forget that he ever  
wrote them. Familiarity naturally breeds contempt. It is, in fact,  
like poring fondly over a piece of blank paper : from repetition, 20

<sup>1</sup> There is a passage in Werter which contains a very pleasing illustration of this doctrine, and is as follows.

" About a league from the town is a place called Walheim. It is very agreeably situated on the side of a hill : from one of the paths which leads out of the village, you have a view of the whole country ; and there is a good old woman who sells wine, coffee, and tea there : but better than all this are two lime-trees before the church, which spread their branches over a little green, surrounded by barns and cottages. I have seen few places more retired and peaceful. I send for a chair and table from the old woman's, and there I drink my coffee and read Homer. It was by accident that I discovered this place one fine afternoon : all was perfect stillness ; every body was in the fields, except a little boy about four years old, who was sitting on the ground, and holding between his knees a child of about six months ; he pressed it to his bosom with his little arms, which made a sort of great chair for it ; and notwithstanding the vivacity which sparkled in his eyes, he sat perfectly still. Quite delighted with the scene, I sat down on a plough opposite, and had great pleasure in drawing this little picture of brotherly tenderness. I added a bit of the hedge, the barn-door, and some broken cart-wheels, without any order, just as they happened to lie ; and in about an hour I found I had made a drawing of great expression and very correct design, without having put in any thing of my own. This confirmed me in the resolution I had made before, only to copy nature for the future. Nature is inexhaustible, and alone forms the greatest masters. Say what you will of rules, they alter the true features, and the natural expression." Page 15.

the words convey no distinct meaning to the mind, are mere idle sounds, except that our vanity claims an interest and property in them. I have more satisfaction in my own thoughts than in dictating them to others: words are necessary to explain the  
5 impression of certain things upon me to the reader, but they rather weaken and draw a veil over than strengthen it to myself. However I might say with the poet, "My mind to me a kingdom is," yet I have little ambition "to set a throne or chair of state in the understandings of other men." The ideas we cherish  
10 most, exist best in a kind of shadowy abstraction,

"Pure in the last recesses of the mind;"

and derive neither force nor interest from being exposed to public view. They are old familiar acquaintance, and any change in them, arising from the adventitious ornaments of style or  
15 dress, is little to their advantage. After I have once written on a subject, it goes out of my mind: my feelings about it have been melted down into words, and *them* I forget. I have, as it were, discharged my memory of its old habitual reckoning, and rubbed out the score of real sentiment. For the future, it exists  
20 only for the sake of others.— But I cannot say, from my own experience, that the same process takes place in transferring our ideas to canvas; they gain more than they lose in the mechanical transformation. One is never tired of painting, because you have to set down not what you knew already, but what you  
25 have just discovered. In the former case, you translate feelings into words; in the latter, names into things. There is a continual creation out of nothing going on. With every stroke of the brush, a new field of inquiry is laid open; new difficulties arise, and new triumphs are prepared over them. By comparing the  
30 imitation with the original, you see what you have done, and how much you have still to do. The test of the senses is severer than that of fancy, and an over-match even for the delusions of our self-love. One part of a picture shames another, and you

determine to paint up to yourself, if you cannot come up to nature. Every object becomes lustrous from the light thrown back upon it by the mirror of art : and by the aid of the pencil we may be said to touch and handle the objects of sight. The air-drawn visions that hover on the verge of existence have a bodily presence given them on the canvas : the form of beauty is changed into substance : the dream and the glory of the universe is made "palpable to feeling as to sight."— And see ! a rainbow starts from the canvas, with all its humid train of glory, as if it were drawn from its cloudy arch in heaven. The spangled landscape glitters with drops of dew after the shower. The "fleecy fools" show their coats in the gleams of the setting sun. The shepherds pipe their farewell notes in the fresh evening air. And is this bright vision made from a dead dull blank, like a bubble reflecting the mighty fabric of the universe ? Who would think this miracle of Rubens's pencil possible to be performed ? Who, having seen it, would not spend his life to do the like ? See how the rich fallows, the bare stubble-field, the scanty harvest-home, drag in Rembrandt's landscapes ! How often have I looked at them and nature, and tried to do the same, till the very "light thickened," and there was an earthiness in the feeling of the air ! There is no end of the refinements of art and nature in this respect. One may look at the misty glimmering horizon till the eye dazzles and the imagination is lost, in hopes to transfer the whole interminable expanse at one blow upon the canvas. Wilson said, he used to try to paint the effect of the motes dancing in the setting sun. At another time, a friend coming into his painting-room when he was sitting on the ground in a melancholy posture, observed that his picture looked like a landscape after a shower : he started up with the greatest delight, and said, "That is the effect I intended to produce, but thought I had failed." Wilson was neglected ; and, by degrees, neglected his art to apply himself to brandy. His hand became unsteady, so that it was only by repeated attempts that he could reach

the place, or produce the effect he aimed at; and when he had done a little to a picture, he would say to any acquaintance who chanced to drop in, "I have painted enough for one day: come, let us go somewhere." It was not so Claude left his pictures, or his studies on the banks of the Tiber, to go in search of other enjoyments, or ceased to gaze upon the glittering sunny vales and distant hills; and while his eye drank in the clear sparkling hues and lovely forms of nature, his hand stamped them on the lucid canvas to last there for ever! — One of the most delightful parts of my life was one fine summer, when I used to walk out of an evening to catch the last light of the sun, gemming the green slopes or russet lawns, and gilding tower or tree, while the blue sky gradually turning to purple and gold, or skirted with dusky grey, hung its broad marble pavement over all, as we see it in the great master of Italian landscape. But to come to more particular explanation of the subject.

The first head I ever tried to paint was an old woman with the upper part of the face shaded by her bonnet, and I certainly laboured it with great perseverance. It took me numberless sittings to do it. I have it by me still, and sometimes look at it with surprise, to think how much pains were thrown away to little purpose, — yet not altogether in vain if it taught me to see good in every thing, and to know that there is nothing vulgar in nature seen with the eye of science or of true art. Refinement creates beauty everywhere: it is the grossness of the spectator that discovers nothing but grossness in the object. Be this as it may, I spared no pains to do my best. If art was long, I thought that life was so too at that moment. I got in the general effect the first day; and pleased and surprised enough I was at my success. The rest was a work of time — of weeks and months (if need were) of patient toil and careful finishing. I had seen an old head by Rembrandt at Burleigh-House, and if I could produce a head at all like Rembrandt in a year, in my life time, it would be glory and felicity and wealth and fame

enough for me! The head I had seen at Burleigh was an exact and wonderful fac-simile of nature, and I resolved to make mine (as nearly as I could) an exact fac-simile of nature. I did not then, nor do I now believe, with Sir Joshua, that the perfection of art consists in giving general appearances without individual 5 details, but in giving general appearances with individual details. Otherwise, I had done my work the first day. But I saw something more in nature than general effect, and I thought it worth my while to give it in the picture. There was a gorgeous effect of light and shade: but there was a delicacy as well as depth in 10 the *chiaro scuro*, which I was bound to follow into all its dim and scarce perceptible variety of tone and shadow. Then I had to make the transition from a strong light to as dark a shade, preserving the masses, but gradually softening off the intermediate parts. It was so in nature: the difficulty was to make it so in 15 the copy. I tried, and failed again and again; I strove harder, and succeeded as I thought. The wrinkles in Rembrandt were not hard lines; but broken and irregular. I saw the same appearance in nature, and strained every nerve to give it. If I could hit off this edgy appearance, and insert the reflected light in the 20 furrows of old age in half a morning, I did not think I had lost a day. Beneath the shrivelled yellow parchment look of the skin there was here and there a streak of the blood colour tingeing the face; this I made a point of conveying, and did not cease to compare what I saw with what I did (with jealous lynx- 25 eyed watchfulness) till I succeeded to the best of my ability and judgment. How many revisions were there! How many attempts to catch an expression which I had seen the day before! How often did we try to get the old position, and wait for the return of the same light! There was a puckering up of the lips, a 30 cautious introversion of the eye under the shadow of the bonnet, indicative of the feebleness and suspicion of old age, which at last we managed, after many trials and some quarrels, to a tolerable nicety. The picture was never finished, and I might

have gone on with it to the present hour.<sup>1</sup> I used to set it on the ground when my day's work was done, and saw revealed to me with swimming eyes the birth of new hopes, and of a new world of objects. The painter thus learns to look at nature with  
5 different eyes. He before saw her "as in a glass darkly, but now face to face." He understands the texture and meaning of the visible universe, and "sees into the life of things," not by the help of mechanical instruments, but of the improved exercise of his faculties, and an intimate sympathy with nature.  
10 The meanest thing is not lost upon him, for he looks at it with an eye to itself, not merely to his own vanity or interest, or the opinion of the world. Even where there is neither beauty nor use — if that ever were — still there is truth, and a sufficient source of gratification in the indulgence of curiosity and activity  
15 of mind. The humblest painter is a true scholar; and the best of scholars — the scholar of nature. For myself, and for the real comfort and satisfaction of the thing, I had rather have been Jan Steen, or Gerard Dow, than the greatest casuist or philologist that ever lived. The painter does not view things in clouds or  
20 "mist, the common gloss of theologians," but applies the same standard of truth and disinterested spirit of inquiry, that influence his daily practice to other subjects. He perceives form, he distinguishes character. He reads men and books with an intuitive eye. He is a critic as well as a connoisseur. The conclusions  
25 he draws are clear and convincing, because they are taken from the things themselves. He is not a fanatic, a dupe, or a slave: for the habit of seeing for himself also disposes him to judge for himself. The most sensible men I know (taken as a class) are painters; that is, they are the most lively observers of what  
30 passes in the world about them, and the closest observers of what passes in their own minds. From their profession they in

<sup>1</sup> It is at present covered with a thick slough of oil and varnish (the perishable vehicle of the English school), like an envelope of gold-beaters' skin, so as to be hardly visible.

general mix more with the world than authors; and if they have not the same fund of acquired knowledge, are obliged to rely more on individual sagacity. I might mention the names of Opie, Fuseli, Northcote, as persons distinguished for striking description and acquaintance with the subtle traits of character.<sup>1</sup> 5 Painters in ordinary society, or in obscure situations where their value is not known, and they are treated with neglect and indifference, have sometimes a forward self-sufficiency of manner: but this is not so much their fault as that of others. Perhaps their want of regular education may also be in fault in such 10 cases. Richardson, who is very tenacious of the respect in which the profession ought to be held, tells a story of Michael Angelo, that after a quarrel between him and Pope Julius II. "upon account of a slight the artist conceived the pontiff had put upon him, Michael Angelo was introduced by a bishop, who, thinking 15 to serve the artist by it, made it an argument that the Pope should be reconciled to him, because men of his profession were commonly ignorant, and of no consequence otherwise: his holiness, enraged at the bishop, struck him with his staff, and told him, it was he that was the blockhead, and affronted the man 20 himself would not offend; the prelate was driven out of the chamber, and Michael Angelo had the Pope's benediction accompanied with presents. This bishop had fallen into the vulgar error, and was rebuked accordingly."

Besides the exercise of the mind, painting exercises the body. 25 It is a mechanical as well as a liberal art. To do anything, to dig a hole in the ground, to plant a cabbage, to hit a mark, to move a shuttle, to work a pattern,—in a word, to attempt to produce any effect, and to *succeed*, has something in it that

<sup>1</sup> Men in business, who are answerable with their fortunes for the consequences of their opinions, and are therefore accustomed to ascertain pretty accurately the grounds on which they act, before they commit themselves on the event, are often men of remarkably quick and sound judgments. Artists in like manner must know tolerably well what they are about, before they can bring the result of their observations to the test of ocular demonstration.

gratifies the love of power, and carries off the restless activity of the mind of man. Indolence is a delightful but distressing state: we must be doing something to be happy. Action is no less necessary than thought to the instinctive tendencies of the human frame; and painting combines them both incessantly.<sup>1</sup> The hand furnishes a practical test of the correctness of the eye; and the eye thus admonished, imposes fresh tasks of skill and industry upon the hand. Every stroke tells, as the verifying of a new truth; and every new observation, the instant it is made, passes into an act and emanation of the will. Every step is nearer what we wish, and yet there is always more to do. In spite of the facility, the fluttering grace, the evanescent hues, that play round the pencil of Rubens and Vandyke, however I may admire, I do not envy them this power so much as I do the slow, patient, laborious execution of Correggio, Leonardo da Vinci, and Andrea del Sarto, where every touch appears conscious of its charge, emulous of truth, and where the painful artist has so distinctly wrought,

"That you might almost say his picture thought!"

In the one case, the colours seemed breathed on the canvas as if by magic, the work and the wonder of a moment: in the other, they seem inlaid in the body of the work, and as if it took the artist years of unremitting labour, and of delightful never-ending progress to perfection.<sup>2</sup> Who would wish ever to come to the close of such works,—not to dwell on them, to return to them, to be wedded to them to the last? Rubens, with his florid, rapid style, complained that when he had just learned his art, he should be forced to die. Leonardo, in the slow advances of his, had lived long enough!

<sup>1</sup> The famous Schiller used to say, that he found the great happiness of life, after all, to consist in the discharge of some mechanical duty.

<sup>2</sup> The rich *impasting* of Titian and Giorgione combines something of the advantages of both these styles, the felicity of the one with the carefulness of the other, and is perhaps to be preferred to either.

Painting is not, like writing, what is properly understood by a sedentary employment. It requires not indeed a strong, but a continued and steady exertion of muscular power. The precision and delicacy of the manual operation, makes up for the want of vehemence, — as to balance himself for any time in the same position the rope-dancer must strain every nerve. Painting for a whole morning gives one as excellent an appetite for one's dinner, as old Abraham Tucker acquired for his by riding over Banstead Downs. It is related of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that "he took no other exercise than what he used in his painting-room," — the writer means, in walking backwards and forwards to look at his picture; but the act of painting itself, of laying on the colours in the proper place, and proper quantity, was a much harder exercise than this alternate receding from and returning to the picture. This last would be rather a relaxation and relief than an effort. It is not to be wondered at, that an artist like Sir Joshua, who delighted so much in the sensual and practical part of his art, should have found himself at a considerable loss when the decay of his sight precluded him, for the last year or two of his life, from the following up of his profession, — "the source," according to his own remark, "of thirty years uninterrupted enjoyment and prosperity to him." It is only those who never think at all, or else who have accustomed themselves to brood incessantly on abstract ideas, that never feel *ennui*.

25

To give one instance more, and then I will have done with this rambling discourse. One of my first attempts was a picture of my father, who was then in a green old age, with strong-marked features, and scarred with the small-pox. I drew it out with a broad light crossing the face, looking down, with spectacles on, reading. The book was Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, in a fine old binding, with Gribelin's etchings. My father would as lieve it had been any other book; but for him to read was to be content, was "riches fineless." The sketch promised well;

and I set to work to finish it, determined to spare no time nor pains. My father was willing to sit as long as I pleased; for there is a natural desire in the mind of man to sit for one's picture, to be the object of continued attention, to have one's  
5 likeness multiplied; and besides his satisfaction in the picture, he had some pride in the artist, though he would rather I should have written a sermon than painted like Rembrandt or like Raphael. Those winter days, with the gleams of sunshine coming through the chapel-windows, and cheered by the notes of  
10 the robin-redbreast in our garden (that "ever in the haunch of winter sings")—as my afternoon's work drew to a close,—were among the happiest of my life. When I gave the effect I intended to any part of the picture for which I had prepared my colours, when I imitated the roughness of the skin by a  
15 lucky stroke of the pencil, when I hit the clear pearly tone of a vein, when I gave the ruddy complexion of health, the blood circulating under the broad shadows of one side of the face, I thought my fortune made; or rather it was already more than made, in my fancying that I might one day be able to say with  
20 Correggio, "*I also am a painter!*" It was an idle thought, a boy's conceit; but it did not make me less happy at the time. I used regularly to set my work in the chair to look at it through the long evenings; and many a time did I return to take leave of it before I could go to bed at night. I remember sending it  
25 with a throbbing heart to the Exhibition, and seeing it hung up there by the side of one of the Honourable Mr. Skeffington (now Sir George). There was nothing in common between them, but that they were the portraits of two very good-natured men. I think, but am not sure, that I finished this portrait (or  
30 another afterwards) on the same day that the news of the battle of Austerlitz came; I walked out in the afternoon, and, as I returned, saw the evening star set over a poor man's cottage with other thoughts and feelings than I shall ever have again. Oh for the revolution of the great Platonic year, that those times

might come over again ! I could sleep out the three hundred and sixty-five thousand intervening years very contentedly ! — The picture is left : the table, the chair, the window where I learned to construe Livy, the chapel where my father preached, remain where they were ; but he himself is gone to rest, full of years, 5 of faith, of hope, and charity !

## ON READING OLD BOOKS

I hate to read new books. There are twenty or thirty volumes that I have read over and over again, and these are the only ones that I have any desire ever to read at all. It was a long time before I could bring myself to sit down to the *Tales of My*  
5 *Landlord*, but now that author's works have made a considerable addition to my scanty library. I am told that some of Lady Morgan's are good, and have been recommended to look into Anastasius; but I have not yet ventured upon that task. A lady, the other day, could not refrain from expressing her sur-  
10 prise to a friend, who said he had been reading *Delphine*: — she asked, — If it had not been published some time back? Women judge of books as they do of fashions or complexions, which are admired only "in their newest gloss." That is not my way. I am not one of those who trouble the circulating  
15 libraries much, or pester the booksellers for mail-coach copies of standard periodical publications. I cannot say that I am greatly addicted to black-letter, but I profess myself well versed in the marble bindings of Andrew Millar, in the middle of the last century; nor does my taste revolt at *Thurloe's State Papers*,  
20 in *Russia leather*; or an ample impression of *Sir William Temple's Essays*, with a portrait after *Sir Godfrey Kneller* in front. I do not think altogether the worse of a book for having survived the author a generation or two. I have more confidence in the dead than the living. Contemporary writers may gener-  
25 ally be divided into two classes — one's friends or one's foes. Of the first we are compelled to think too well, and of the last we are disposed to think too ill, to receive much genuine pleasure from the perusal, or to judge fairly of the merits of either. One

candidate for literary fame, who happens to be of our acquaintance, writes finely, and like a man of genius; but unfortunately has a foolish face, which spoils a delicate passage:—another inspires us with the highest respect for his personal talents and character, but does not quite come up to our expectations in 5 print. All these contradictions and petty details interrupt the calm current of our reflections. If you want to know what any of the authors were who lived before our time, and are still objects of anxious inquiry, you have only to look into their works. But the dust and smoke and noise of modern literature 10 have nothing in common with the pure, silent air of immortality.

When I take up a work that I have read before (the oftener the better) I know what I have to expect. The satisfaction is not lessened by being anticipated. When the entertainment is altogether new, I sit down to it as I should to a strange dish,— 15 turn and pick out a bit here and there, and am in doubt what to think of the composition. There is a want of confidence and security to second appetite. New-fangled books are also like made-dishes in this respect, that they are generally little else than hashes and *rifaccimentos* of what has been served up entire and 20 in a more natural state at other times. Besides, in thus turning to a well-known author, there is not only an assurance that my time will not be thrown away, or my palate nauseated with the most insipid or vilest trash,—but I shake hands with, and look an old, tried, and valued friend in the face,\*—compare notes, 25 and chat the hours away. It is true, we form dear friendships with such ideal guests—dearer, alas! and more lasting, than those with our most intimate acquaintance. In reading a book which is an old favourite with me (say the first novel I ever read) I not only have the pleasure of imagination and of a crit- 30 ical relish of the work, but the pleasures of memory added to it. It recalls the same feelings and associations which I had in first reading it, and which I can never have again in any other way. Standard productions of this kind are links in the chain of our

conscious being. They bind together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity. They are land-marks and guides in our journey through life. They are pegs and loops on which we can hang up, or from which we can take down, at  
15 pleasure, the wardrobe of a moral imagination, the relics of our best affections, the tokens and records of our happiest hours. They are "for thoughts and for remembrance!" They are like Fortunatus's Wishing-Cap — they give us the best riches — those of Fancy; and transport us, not over half the globe, but  
10 (which is better) over half our lives, at a word's notice!

My father Shandy solaced himself with *Bruscombille*. Give me for this purpose a volume of *Peregrine Pickle* or *Tom Jones*. Open either of them any where — at the *Memoirs of Lady Vane*, or the adventures at the masquerade with *Lady Bellaston*, or  
15 the disputes between *Thwackum* and *Square*, or the escape of *Molly Seagrim*, or the incident of *Sophia* and her muff, or the edifying prolixity of her aunt's lecture — and there I find the same delightful, busy, bustling scene as ever, and feel myself the same as when I was first introduced into the midst of it.  
20 Nay, sometimes the sight of an odd volume of these good old English authors on a stall, or the name lettered on the back among others on the shelves of a library, answers the purpose, revives the whole train of ideas, and sets "the puppets dallying."  
Twenty years are struck off the list, and I am a child again. A  
25 sage philosopher, 'who was not a very wise man, said, that he should like very well to be young again, if he could take his experience along with him. This ingenious person did not seem to be aware, by the gravity of his remark, that the great advantage of being young is to be without this weight of experience,  
30 which he would fain place upon the shoulders of youth, and which never comes too late with years. Oh! what a privilege to be able to let this hump, like *Christian's* burthen, drop from off one's back, and transport one's-self, by the help of a little musty duodecimo, to the time when "ignorance was bliss," and

when we first got a peep at the rarée-show of the world, through the glass of fiction — gazing at mankind, as we do at wild beasts in a menagerie, through the bars of their cages, — or at curiosities in a museum, that we must not touch! For myself, not only are the old ideas of the contents of the work brought back 5 to my mind in all their vividness, but the old associations of the faces and persons of those I then knew, as they were in their life-time — the place where I sat to read the volume, the day when I got it, the feeling of the air, the fields, the sky — return, and all my early impressions with them. This is 10 better to me — those places, those times, those persons, and those feelings that come across me as I retrace the story and devour the page, are to me better far than the wet sheets of the last new novel from the Ballantyne press, to say nothing of the Minerva press in Leadenhall-street. It is like visiting the scenes 15 of early youth. I think of the time “when I was in my father’s house, and my path ran down with butter and honey,” — when I was a little, thoughtless child, and had no other wish or care but to con my daily task, and be happy! — Tom Jones, I remember, was the first work that broke the spell. It came down 20 in numbers once a fortnight, in Cooke’s pocket-edition, embellished with cuts. I had hitherto read only in school-books, and a tiresome ecclesiastical history (with the exception of Mrs. Radcliffe’s *Romance of the Forest*): but this had a different relish with it, — “sweet in the mouth,” though not “bitter in 25 the belly.” It smacked of the world I lived in, and in which I was to live — and shewed me groups, “gay creatures” not “of the element,” but of the earth; not “living in the clouds,” but travelling the same road that I did; — some that had passed on before me, and others that might soon overtake me. My heart 30 had palpitated at the thoughts of a boarding-school ball, or gala-day at Midsummer or Christmas: but the world I had found out in Cooke’s edition of the *British Novelists* was to me a dance through life, a perpetual gala-day. The six-penny

numbers of this work regularly contrived to leave off just in the middle of a sentence, and in the nick of a story, where Tom Jones discovers Square behind the blanket; or where Parson Adams, in the inextricable confusion of events, very undesignedly gets to bed to Mrs. Slip-slop. Let me caution the reader against this impression of Joseph Andrews; for there is a picture of Fanny in it which he should not set his heart on, lest he should never meet with any thing like it; or if he should, it would, perhaps, be better for him that he had not. It was just like —— ——! With what eagerness I used to look forward to the next number, and open the prints! Ah! never again shall I feel the enthusiastic delight with which I gazed at the figures, and anticipated the story and adventures of Major Bath and Commodore Trunnion, of Trim and my Uncle Toby, of Don Quixote and Sancho and Dapple, of Gil Blas and Dame Lorenza Sephora, of Laura and the fair Lucretia, whose lips open and shut like buds of roses. To what nameless ideas did they give rise,—with what airy delights I filled up the outlines, as I hung in silence over the page!—Let me still recal them, that they may breathe fresh life into me, and that I may live that birthday of thought and romantic pleasure over again! Talk of the *ideal*! This is the only true ideal—the heavenly tints of Fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the spring-tide of human life.

Oh! Memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,  
And give those scenes thine everlasting life!

The paradox with which I set out is, I hope, less startling than it was; the reader will, by this time, have been let into my secret. Much about the same time, or I believe rather earlier, I took a particular satisfaction in reading Chubb's Tracts, and I often think I will get them again to wade through. There is a high gusto of polemical divinity in them; and you fancy that you hear a club of shoemakers at Salisbury, debating a disputable text from one of St. Paul's Epistles in a workmanlike style,

with equal shrewdness and pertinacity. I cannot say much for my metaphysical studies, into which I launched shortly after with great ardour, so as to make a toil of a pleasure. I was presently entangled in the briars and thorns of subtle distinctions, — of “fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute,” though 5 I cannot add that “in their wandering mazes I found no end;” for I did arrive at some very satisfactory and potent conclusions; nor will I go so far, however ungrateful the subject might seem, as to exclaim with Marlowe’s Faustus — “Would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book” — that is, never studied such 10 authors as Hartley, Hume, Berkeley, &c. Locke’s Essay on the Human Understanding is, however, a work from which I never derived either pleasure or profit; and Hobbes, dry and powerful as he is, I did not read till long afterwards. I read a few poets, which did not much hit my taste, — for I would have the reader 15 understand, I am deficient in the faculty of imagination; but I fell early upon French romances and philosophy, and devoured them tooth-and-nail. Many a dainty repast have I made of the New Eloise; — the description of the kiss; the excursion on the water; the letter of St. Preux, recalling the time of their first 20 loves; and the account of Julia’s death; these I read over and over again with unspeakable delight and wonder. Some years after, when I met with this work again, I found I had lost nearly my whole relish for it (except some few parts) and was I remember, very much mortified with the change in my taste, 25 which I sought to attribute to the smallness and gilt edges of the edition I had bought, and its being perfumed with rose-leaves. Nothing could exceed the gravity, the solemnity with which I carried home and read the Dedication to the Social Contract, with some other pieces of the same author, which I 30 had picked up at a stall in a coarse leathern cover. Of the Confessions I have spoken elsewhere, and may repeat what I have said — “Sweet is the dew of their memory, and pleasant the balm of their recollection!” Their beauties are not

"scattered like stray-gifts o'er the earth," but sown thick on the page, rich and rare. I wish I had never read the *Emilius*, or read it with less implicit faith. I had no occasion to pamper my natural aversion to affectation or pretence, by romantic and  
5 artificial means. I had better have formed myself on the model of Sir Fopling Flutter. There is a class of persons whose virtues and most shining qualities sink in, and are concealed by, an absorbent ground of modesty and reserve; and such a one I do, without vanity, profess myself.<sup>1</sup> Now these are the very  
10 persons who are likely to attach themselves to the character of *Emilius*, and of whom it is sure to be the bane. This dull, phlegmatic, retiring humour is not in a fair way to be corrected, but confirmed and rendered desperate, by being in that work held up as an object of imitation, as an example of simplicity  
15 and magnanimity — by coming upon us with all the recommendations of novelty, surprise, and superiority to the prejudices of the world — by being stuck upon a pedestal, made amiable, dazzling, a *leurre de dupe*! The reliance on solid worth which it inculcates, the preference of sober truth to gaudy tinsel, hangs  
20 like a mill-stone round the neck of the imagination — "a load to sink a navy" — impedes our progress, and blocks up every prospect in life. A man, to get on, to be successful, conspicuous, applauded, should not retire upon the centre of his conscious resources, but be always at the circumference of appearances.  
25 He must envelop himself in a halo of mystery — he must ride in an equipage of opinion — he must walk with a train of self-conceit following him — he must not strip himself to a buff-jerkin, to the doublet and hose of his real merits, but must surround himself with a *cortege* of prejudices, like the signs of  
30 the Zodiac — he must seem anything but what he is, and then he may pass for anything he pleases. The world love to be

<sup>1</sup> Nearly the same sentiment was wittily and happily expressed by a friend, who had some lottery puffs, which he had been employed to write, returned on his hands for their too great severity of thought and classical terseness of style, and who observed on that occasion, that "Modest merit never can succeed!"

amused by hollow professions, to be deceived by flattering appearances, to live in a state of hallucination; and can forgive everything but the plain, downright, simple honest truth — such as we see it chalked out in the character of Emilius. — To return from this digression, which is a little out of place here. 5

Books have in a great measure lost their power over me; nor can I revive the same interest in them as formerly. I perceive when a thing is good, rather than feel it. It is true,

Marcian Colonna is a dainty book;

and the reading of Mr. Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* lately made me 10 regret that I was not young again. The beautiful and tender images there conjured up, "come like shadows — so depart." The "tiger-moth's wings," which he has spread over his rich poetic blazonry, just flit across my fancy; the gorgeous twilight window which he has painted over again in his verse, to me 15 "blushes" almost in vain "with blood of queens and kings." I know how I should have felt at one time in reading such passages; and that is all. The sharp luscious flavour, the fine *aroma* is fled, and nothing but the stalk, the bran, the husk of literature is left. If any one were to ask me what I read now, 20 I might answer with my Lord Hamlet in the play — "Words, words, words." — "What is the matter?" — "*Nothing!*" — They have scarce a meaning. But it was not always so. There was a time when to my thinking, every word was a flower or a pearl, like those which dropped from the mouth of the little 25 peasant-girl in the Fairy tale, or like those that fall from the great preacher in the Caledonian Chapel! I drank of the stream of knowledge that tempted, but did not mock my lips, as of the river of life, freely. How eagerly I slaked my thirst of German sentiment, "as the hart that panteth for the water-springs;" 30 how I bathed and revelled, and added my floods of tears to Goethe's Sorrows of Werter, and to Schiller's Robbers —

Giving my stock of more to that which had too much!

I read, and assented with all my soul to Coleridge's fine Sonnet, beginning —

- 5 Schiller! that hour I would have wish'd to die,  
If through the shuddering midnight I had sent,  
From the dark dungeon of the tow'r time-rent,  
That fearful voice, a famish'd father's cry!

I believe I may date my insight into the mysteries of poetry from the commencement of my acquaintance with the authors of the Lyrical Ballads; at least, my discrimination of the higher  
10 sorts — not my predilection for such writers as Goldsmith or Pope: nor do I imagine they will say I got my liking for the Novelists, or the comic writers,— for the characters of Valentine, Tattle, or Miss Prue, from them. If so, I must have got from them what they never had themselves. In points where poetic  
15 diction and conception are concerned, I may be at a loss, and liable to be imposed upon: but in forming an estimate of passages relating to common life and manners, I cannot think I am a plagiarist from any man. I there “know my cue without a prompter.” I may say of such studies — *Intus et in cute*. I  
20 am just able to admire those literal touches of observation and description, which persons of loftier pretensions overlook and despise. I think I comprehend something of the characteristic part of Shakspeare; and in him indeed, all is characteristic, even the nonsense and poetry. I believe it was the celebrated Sir  
25 Humphry Davy who used to say, that Shakspeare was rather a metaphysician than a poet. At any rate, it was not ill said. I wish that I had sooner known the dramatic writers contemporary with Shakspeare; for in looking them over about a year ago, I almost revived my old passion for reading, and my old  
30 delight in books, though they were very nearly new to me. The Periodical Essayists I read long ago. The Spectator I liked extremely: but the Tatler took my fancy most. I read the others soon after, the Rambler, the Adventurer, the World, the Connoisseur: I was not sorry to get to the end of them,

and have no desire to go regularly through them again. I consider myself a thorough adept in Richardson. I like the longest of his novels best, and think no part of them tedious; nor should I ask to have any thing better to do than to read them from beginning to end, to take them up when I chose, and lay 5 them down when I was tired, in some old family mansion in the country, till every word and syllable relating to the bright *Clarissa*, the divine *Clementina*, the beautiful *Pamela*, "with every trick and line of their sweet favour," were once more "graven in my heart's table."<sup>1</sup> I have a sneaking kindness for 10 *Mackenzie's Julia de Roubigné* — for the deserted mansion, and straggling gilliflowers on the mouldering garden-wall; and still more for his *Man of Feeling*; not that it is better, nor so good; but at the time I read it, I sometimes thought of the heroine, *Miss Walton*, and of *Miss* — together, and "that ligament, 15 fine as it was, was never broken!" — One of the poets that I have always read with most pleasure, and can wander about in for ever with a sort of voluptuous indolence, is *Spenser*; and I like *Chaucer* even better. The only writer among the Italians I can pretend to any knowledge of, is *Boccaccio*, and of him I 20 cannot express half my admiration. His story of the *Hawk* I could read and think of from day to day, just as I would look at a picture of *Titian's*! —

I remember, as long ago as the year 1798, going to a neighbouring town (*Shrewsbury*, where *Farquhar* has laid the 25 plot of his *Recruiting Officer*) and bringing home with me, "at one proud swoop," a copy of *Milton's Paradise Lost*, and another of *Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution* — both which

<sup>1</sup> During the peace of *Amiens*, a young English officer, of the name of *Lovelace*, was presented at *Buonaparte's levee*. Instead of the usual question, "Where have you served, Sir?" the First Consul immediately addressed him, "I perceive your name, Sir, is the same as that of the hero of *Richardson's Romance*!" Here was a Consul. The young man's uncle, who was called *Lovelace*, told me this anecdote while we were stopping together at *Calais*. I had also been thinking that his was the same name as that of the hero of *Richardson's Romance*. This is one of my reasons for liking *Buonaparte*.

I have still ; and I still recollect, when I see the covers, the pleasure with which I dipped into them as I returned with my double prize. I was set up for one while. That time is past "with all its giddy raptures : " but I am still anxious to preserve its memory, "embalmed with odours." — With respect to the first of these works, I would be permitted to remark here in passing, that it is a sufficient answer to the German criticism which has since been started against the character of Satan (*viz.* that it is not one of disgusting deformity, or pure, defecated malice) to say that Milton has there drawn, not the abstract principle of evil, not a devil incarnate, but a fallen angel. This is the scriptural account, and the poet has followed it. We may safely retain such passages as that well-known one —

— His form had not yet lost  
 15           All her original brightness ; nor appear'd  
               Less than archangel ruin'd ; and the excess  
               Of glory obscur'd —

for the theory, which is opposed to them, "falls flat upon the grunsel edge, and shames its worshippers." Let us hear no more then of this monkish cant, and bigoted outcry for the restoration of the horns and tail of the devil ! — Again, as to the other work, Burke's Reflections, I took a particular pride and pleasure in it, and read it to myself and others for months afterwards. I had reason for my prejudice in favour of this author. To understand an adversary is some praise : to admire him is more. I thought I did both : I knew I did one. From the first time I ever cast my eyes on any thing of Burke's (which was an extract from his Letter to a Noble Lord in a three-times a week paper, The St. James's Chronicle, in 1796), I said to myself, "This is true eloquence : this is a man pouring out his mind on paper." All other style seemed to me pedantic and impertinent. Dr. Johnson's was walking on stilts ; and even Junius's (who was at that time a favourite with me) with all his terseness, shrunk up into little antithetic points and well-trimmed

sentences. But Burke's style was forked and playful as the lightning, crested like the serpent. He delivered plain things on a plain ground ; but when he rose, there was no end of his flights and circumgyrations — and in this very Letter, "he, like an eagle in a dove-cot, fluttered *his* Volscians" (the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale)<sup>1</sup> "in Corioli." I did not care for his doctrines. I was then, and am still, proof against their contagion ; but I admired the author, and was considered as not a very staunch partisan of the opposite side, though I thought myself that an abstract proposition was one thing — a masterly transition, a brilliant metaphor, another. I conceived too that he might be wrong in his main argument, and yet deliver fifty truths in arriving at a false conclusion. I remember Coleridge assuring me, as a poetical and political set-off to my sceptical admiration, that Wordsworth had written an Essay on Marriage, which, for manly thought and nervous expression, he deemed incomparably superior. As I had not, at that time, seen any specimens of Mr. Wordsworth's prose style, I could not express my doubts on the subject. If there are greater prose-writers than Burke, they either lie out of my course of study, or are beyond my sphere of comprehension. I am too old to be a convert to a new mythology of genius. The niches are occupied, the tables are full. If such is still my admiration of this man's misapplied powers, what must it have been at a time when I myself was in vain trying, year after year, to write a single Essay, nay, a single page or sentence ; when I regarded the wonders of his pen with the longing eyes of one who was dumb and a changeling ; and when, to be able to convey the slightest conception of my meaning to others in words, was the height of an almost hopeless ambition ! But I never measured others' excellences by my own defects : though a sense of my own incapacity, and of the steep, impassable ascent from me to them, made me regard them with greater awe and fondness.

<sup>1</sup> He is there called "Citizen Lauderdale." Is this the present Earl ?

I have thus run through most of my early studies and favourite authors, some of whom I have since criticised more at large. Whether those observations will survive me, I neither know nor do I much care: but to the works themselves, "worthy of all  
5 acceptance," and to the feelings they have always excited in me since I could distinguish a meaning in language, nothing shall ever prevent me from looking back with gratitude and triumph. To have lived in the cultivation of an intimacy with such works, and to have familiarly relished such names, is not  
10 to have lived quite in vain.

There are other authors whom I have never read, and yet whom I have frequently had a great desire to read, from some circumstance relating to them. Among these is Lord Clarendon's History of the Grand Rebellion, after which I have a  
15 hankering, from hearing it spoken of by good judges—from my interest in the events, and knowledge of the characters from other sources, and from having seen fine portraits of most of them. I like to read a well-penned character, and Clarendon is said to have been a master in this way. I should like to read  
20 Froissart's Chronicles, Hollingshed and Stowe, and Fuller's Worthies. I intend, whenever I can, to read Beaumont and Fletcher all through. There are fifty-two of their plays, and I have only read a dozen or fourteen of them. A Wife for a Month, and Thierry and Theodoret, are, I am told, delicious,  
25 and I can believe it. I should like to read the speeches in Thucydides, and Guicciardini's History of Florence, and Don Quixote in the original. I have often thought of reading the Loves of Persiles and Sigismunda, and the Galatea of the same author. But I somehow reserve them like "another Yarrow."  
30 I should also like to read the last new novel (if I could be sure it was so) of the author of Waverley:—no one would be more glad than I to find it the best!—

## ON A LANDSCAPE OF NICOLAS POUSSIN

"And blind Orion hungry for the morn."

Orion, the subject of this landscape, was the classical Nimrod; and is called by Homer, "a hunter of shadows, himself a shade." He was the son of Neptune; and having lost an eye in some affray between the Gods and men, was told that if he 5 would go to meet the rising sun, he would recover his sight. He is represented setting out on his journey, with men on his shoulders to guide him, a bow in his hand, and Diana in the clouds greeting him. He stalks along, a giant upon earth, and reels and falters in his gait, as if just awaked out of sleep, or 10 uncertain of his way; — you see his blindness, though his back is turned. Mists rise around him, and veil the sides of the green forests; earth is dank and fresh with dews, the "grey dawn and the Pleiades before him dance," and in the distance are seen the blue hills and sullen ocean. Nothing was ever more 15 finely conceived or done. It breathes the spirit of the morning; its moisture, its repose, its obscurity, waiting the miracle of light to kindle it into smiles: the whole is, like the principal figure in it, "a forerunner of the dawn." The same atmosphere tinges and imbues every object, the same dull light "shadowy 20 sets off" the face of nature: one feeling of vastness, of strangeness, and of primeval forms pervades the painter's canvas, and we are thrown back upon the first integrity of things. This great and learned man might be said to see nature through the glass of time: he alone has a right to be considered as the 25 painter of classical antiquity. Sir Joshua has done him justice in this respect. He could give to the scenery of his heroic fables that unimpaired look of original nature, full, solid, large,

luxuriant, teeming with life and power ; or deck it with all the pomp of art, with temples and towers, and mythologic groves. His pictures " denote a foregone conclusion." He applies nature to his purposes, works out her images according to the standard  
5 of his thoughts, embodies high fictions ; and the first conception being given, all the rest seems to grow out of, and be assimilated to it, by the unfailing process of a studious imagination. Like his own Orion, he overlooks the surrounding scene, appears to " take up the isles as a very little thing, and to lay the earth  
10 in a balance." With a laborious and mighty grasp, he put nature into the mould of the ideal and antique ; and was among painters (more than any one else) what Milton was among poets. There is in both something of the same pedantry, the same stiffness, the same elevation, the same grandeur, the same  
15 mixture of art and nature, the same richness of borrowed materials, the same unity of character. Neither the poet nor the painter lowered the subjects they treated, but filled up the outline in the fancy, and added strength and reality to it ; and thus not only satisfied, but surpassed the expectations of the  
20 spectator and the reader. This is held for the triumph and the perfection of works of art. To give us nature, such as we see it, is well and deserving of praise ; to give us nature, such as we have never seen, but have often wished to see it, is better, and deserving of higher praise. He who can show the world  
25 in its first naked glory, with the hues of fancy spread over it, or in its high and palmy state, with the gravity of history stamped on the proud monuments of vanished empire, — who, by his " so potent art," can recal time past, transport us to distant places, and join the regions of imagination (a new con-  
30 quest) to those of reality, — who shows us not only what nature is, but what she has been, and is capable of, — he who does this, and does it with simplicity, with truth, and grandeur, is lord of nature and her powers ; and his mind is universal, and his art the master-art !

There is nothing in this "more than natural," if criticism could be persuaded to think so. The historic painter does not neglect or contravene nature, but follows her more closely up into her fantastic heights, or hidden recesses. He demonstrates what she would be in conceivable circumstances, and under 5 implied conditions. He "gives to airy nothing a local habitation," not "a name." At his touch, words start up into images, thoughts become things. He clothes a dream, a phantom with form and colour and the wholesome attributes of reality. *His* art is a second nature; not a different one. There are those, 10 indeed, who think that not to copy nature, is the rule for attaining perfection. Because they cannot paint the objects which they have seen, they fancy themselves qualified to paint the ideas which they have not seen. But it is possible to fail in this latter and more difficult style of imitation, as well as in the 15 former humbler one. The detection, it is true, is not so easy, because the objects are not so nigh at hand to compare, and therefore there is more room both for false pretension and for self-deceit. They take an epic motto or subject, and conclude that the spirit is implied as a thing of course. They paint 20 inferior portraits, maudlin lifeless faces, without ordinary expression, or one look, feature, or particle of nature in them, and think that this is to rise to the truth of history. They vulgarise and degrade whatever is interesting or sacred to the mind, and suppose that they thus add to the dignity of their 25 profession. They represent a face that seems as if no thought or feeling of any kind had ever passed through it, and would have you believe that this is the very sublime of expression, such as it would appear in heroes, or demi-gods of old, when rapture or agony was raised to its height. They show you 30 a landscape that looks as if the sun never shone upon it, and tell you that it is not modern—that so earth looked when Titan first kissed it with his rays. 'This is not the true *ideal*. It is not to fill the moulds of the imagination, but to deface and

injure them: it is not to come up to, but to fall short of the poorest conception in the public mind. Such pictures should not be hung in the same room with that of Orion.<sup>1</sup>

Poussin was, of all painters, the most poetical. He was the  
 5 painter of ideas. No one ever told a story half so well, nor so well knew what was capable of being told by the pencil. He seized on, and struck off with grace and precision, just that point of view which would be likely to catch the reader's fancy. There is a significance, a consciousness in whatever he does (sometimes  
 10 a vice, but oftener a virtue) beyond any other painter. His Giants sitting on the tops of craggy mountains, as huge themselves, and playing idly on their Pan's-pipes, seem to have been seated there these three thousand years, and to know the beginning and the end of their own story. An infant Bacchus or Jupiter is big with  
 15 his future destiny. Even inanimate and dumb things speak a language of their own. His snakes, the messengers of fate, are inspired with human intellect. His trees grow and expand their leaves in the air, glad of the rain, proud of the sun, awake to

<sup>1</sup> Every thing tends to show the manner in which a great artist is formed. If any person could claim an exemption from the careful imitation of individual objects, it was Nicolas Poussin. He studied the antique, but he also studied nature. "I have often admired," says Vignuel de Marville, who knew him at a late period of his life, "the love he had for his art. Old as he was, I frequently saw him among the ruins of ancient Rome, out in the Campagna, or along the banks of the Tyber, sketching a scene that had pleased him; and I often met him with his handkerchief full of stones, moss, or flowers, which he carried home, that he might copy them exactly from nature. One day I asked him how he had attained to such a degree of perfection, as to have gained so high a rank among the great painters of Italy? He answered, I HAVE NEGLECTED NOTHING." — *See his Life lately published.* It appears from this account that he had not fallen into a recent error, that Nature puts the man of genius out. As a contrast to the foregoing description, I might mention, that I remember an old gentleman once asking Mr. West in the British Gallery, if he had ever been at Athens? To which the President made answer, No; nor did he feel any great desire to go; for that he thought he had as good an idea of the place from the Catalogue, as he could get by living there for any number of years. What would he have said, if any one had told him, he could get as good an idea of the subject of one of his great works from reading the Catalogue of it, as from seeing the picture itself! Yet the answer was characteristic of the genius of the painter.

the winds of heaven. In his Plague of Athens, the very buildings seem stiff with horror. His picture of the Deluge is, perhaps, the finest historical landscape in the world. You see a waste of waters, wide, interminable : the sun is labouring, wan and weary, up the sky ; the clouds, dull and leaden, lie like a load upon the eye, and heaven and earth seem commingling into one confused mass ! His human figures are sometimes " o'er-informed " with this kind of feeling. Their actions have too much gesticulation, and the set expression of the features borders too much on the mechanical and caricatured style. In this respect, they form a contrast to Raphael's, whose figures never appear to be sitting for their pictures, or to be conscious of a spectator, or to have come from the painter's hand. In Nicolas Poussin, on the contrary, every thing seems to have a distinct understanding with the artist ; " the very stones prate of their whereabouts : " each object has its part and place assigned, and is in a sort of compact with the rest of the picture. It is this conscious keeping, and, as it were, *internal* design, that gives their peculiar character to the works of this artist. There was a picture of Aurora in the British Gallery a year or two ago. It was a suffusion of golden light. The Goddess wore her saffron-coloured robes, and appeared just risen from the gloomy bed of old Tithonus. Her very steeds, milk-white, were tinged with the yellow dawn. It was a personification of the morning. — Poussin succeeded better in classic than in sacred subjects. The latter are comparatively heavy, forced, full of violent contrasts of colour, of red, blue, and black, and without the true prophetic inspiration of the characters. But in his Pagan allegories and fables he was quite at home. The native gravity and native levity of the Frenchman were combined with Italian scenery and an antique gusto, and gave even to his colouring an air of learned indifference. He wants, in one respect, grace, form, expression ; but he has every where sense and meaning, perfect costume and propriety. His personages always belong to the class and time represented, and

are strictly versed in the business in hand. His grotesque compositions in particular, his Nymphs and Fauns, are superior (at least, as far as style is concerned) even to those of Rubens. They are taken more immediately out of fabulous history. Rubens's  
 5 Satyrs and Bacchantes have a more jovial and voluptuous aspect, are more drunk with pleasure, more full of animal spirits and riotous impulses; they laugh and bound along —

Leaping like wanton kids in pleasant spring:

but those of Poussin have more of the intellectual part of the  
 10 character, and seem vicious on reflection, and of set purpose. Rubens's are noble specimens of a class; Poussin's are allegorical abstractions of the same class, with bodies less pampered, but with minds more secretly depraved. The Bacchanalian groups of the Flemish painter were, however, his masterpieces  
 15 in composition. Witness those prodigies of colour, character, and expression at Blenheim. In the more chaste and refined delineation of classic fable, Poussin was without a rival. Rubens, who was a match for him in the wild and picturesque, could not pretend to vie with the elegance and purity of thought in his  
 20 picture of Apollo giving a poet a cup of water to drink, nor with the gracefulness of design in the figure of a nymph squeezing the juice of a bunch of grapes from her fingers (a rosy wine-press) which falls into the mouth of a chubby infant below. But, above all, who shall celebrate, in terms of fit praise, his picture  
 25 of the shepherds in the Vale of Tempe going out in a fine morning of the spring, and coming to a tomb with this inscription: —  
 ET EGO IN ARCADIA VIXI! The eager curiosity of some, the expression of others who start back with fear and surprise, the clear breeze playing with the branches of the shadowing trees,  
 30 "the valleys low, where the mild zephyrs use," the distant, uninterrupted, sunny prospects speak (and for ever will speak on) of ages past to ages yet to come!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Poussin has repeated this subject more than once, and appears to have revelled in its witcheries. I have before alluded to it, and may again. It is hard that we

Pictures are a set of chosen images, a stream of pleasant thoughts passing through the mind. It is a luxury to have the walls of our rooms hung round with them, and no less so to have such a gallery in the mind, to con over the relics of ancient art bound up "within the book and volume of the brain, unmixed 5 (if it were possible) with baser matter!" A life passed among pictures, in the study and the love of art, is a happy noiseless dream: or rather, it is to dream and to be awake at the same time; for it has all "the sober certainty of waking bliss," with the romantic voluptuousness of a visionary and abstracted being. 10 They are the bright consummate essences of things, and "he who knows of these delights to taste and interpose them oft, is not unwise!" — The Orion, which I have here taken occasion to descant upon, is one of a collection of excellent pictures, as this collection is itself one of a series from the old masters, which 15 have for some years back embrowned the walls of the British Gallery, and enriched the public eye. What hues (those of nature mellowed by time) breathe around, as we enter! What forms are there, woven into the memory! What looks, which only the answering looks of the spectator can express! What intellectual 20 stores have been yearly poured forth from the shrine of ancient art! The works are various, but the names the same — heaps of Rembrandts frowning from the darkened walls, Rubens's glad gorgeous groups, Titians more rich and rare, Claudes always exquisite, sometimes beyond compare, Guido's endless cloy- 25 ing sweetness, the learning of Poussin and the Caracci, and Raphael's princely magnificence, crowning all. We read certain letters and syllables in the catalogue, and at the well-known magic sound, a miracle of skill and beauty starts to view. One might think that one year's prodigal display of such perfection 30 would exhaust the labours of one man's life; but the next year, and the next to that, we find another harvest reaped and

should not be allowed to dwell as often as we please on what delights us, when things that are disagreeable recur so often against our will.

gathered in to the great garner of art, by the same immortal hands —

Old Genius the porter of them was ;  
He letteth in, he letteth out to wend. —

5 Their works seem endless as their reputation — to be many as they are complete — to multiply with the desire of the mind to see more and more of them ; as if there were a living power in the breath of Fame, and in the very names of the great heirs of glory “there were propagation too !” It is something to have  
10 a collection of this sort to count upon once a year ; to have one last, lingering look yet to come. Pictures are scattered like stray gifts through the world ; and while they remain, earth has yet a little gilding left, not quite rubbed off, dishonoured, and defaced. There are plenty of standard works still to be found in this  
15 country, in the collections at Blenheim, at Burleigh, and in those belonging to Mr. Angerstein, Lord Grosvenor, the Marquis of Stafford, and others, to keep up this treat to the lovers of art for many years : and it is the more desirable to reserve a privileged sanctuary of this sort, where the eye may dote, and the  
20 heart take its fill of such pictures as Poussin’s Orion, since the Louvre is stripped of its triumphant spoils, and since he, who collected it, and wore it as a rich jewel in his Iron Crown, the hunter of greatness and of glory, is himself a shade ! —

## ON THE FEAR OF DEATH

“ And our little life is rounded with a sleep.”

Perhaps the best cure for the fear of death is to reflect that life has a beginning as well as an end. There was a time when we were not: this gives us no concern — why then should it trouble us that a time will come when we shall cease to be? I 5 have no wish to have been alive a hundred years ago, or in the reign of Queen Anne: why should I regret and lay it so much to heart that I shall not be alive a hundred years hence, in the reign of I cannot tell whom?

When Bickerstaff wrote his Essays, I knew nothing of the 10 subjects of them: nay, much later, and but the other day, as it were, in the beginning of the reign of George III. when Goldsmith, Johnson, Burke, used to meet at the Globe, when Garrick was in his glory, and Reynolds was over head and ears with his portraits, and Sterne brought out the volumes of 15 Tristram Shandy year by year, it was without consulting me: I had not the slightest intimation of what was going on: the debates in the House of Commons on the American war, or the firing at Bunker's hill, disturbed not me: yet I thought this no evil — I neither ate, drank, nor was merry, yet I did 20 not complain: I had not then looked out into this breathing world, yet I was well; and the world did quite as well without me as I did without it! Why then should I make all this outcry about parting with it, and being no worse off than I was before? There is nothing in the recollection that at a certain 25 time we were not come into the world, that “the gorge rises at” — why should we revolt at the idea that we must one day go out of it? To die is only to be as we were before we were

born; yet no one feels any remorse, or regret, or repugnance, in contemplating this last idea. It is rather a relief and disburthening of the mind: it seems to have been holiday-time with us then: we were not called to appear upon the stage  
5 of life, to wear robes or tatters, to laugh or cry, be hooted or applauded; we had lain *perdus* all this while, snug, out of harm's way; and had slept out our thousands of centuries without wanting to be waked up; at peace and free from care, in a long nonage, in a sleep deeper and calmer than  
10 that of infancy, wrapped in the softest and finest dust. And the worst that we dread is, after a short, fretful, feverish being, after vain hopes, and idle fears, to sink to final repose again, and forget the troubled dream of life! . . . Ye armed men, knights templars, that sleep in the stone aisles of that old  
15 Temple church, where all is silent above, and where a deeper silence reigns below (not broken by the pealing organ), are ye not contented where ye lie? Or would you come out of your long homes to go to the Holy War? Or do ye complain that pain no longer visits you, that sickness has done its worst,  
20 that you have paid the last debt to nature, that you hear no more of the thickening phalanx of the foe, or your lady's waning love; and that while this ball of earth rolls its eternal round, no sound shall ever pierce through to disturb your lasting repose, fixed as the marble over your tombs, breathless as  
25 the grave that holds you! And thou, oh! thou, to whom my heart turns, and will turn while it has feeling left, who didst love in vain, and whose first was thy last sigh, wilt not thou too rest in peace (or wilt thou cry to me complaining from thy clay-cold bed) when that sad heart is no longer sad, and that sorrow  
30 is dead which thou wert only called into the world to feel!

It is certain that there is nothing in the idea of a pre-existent state that excites our longing like the prospect of a posthumous existence. We are satisfied to have begun life when we did; we have no ambition to have set out on our journey sooner;

and feel that we have had quite enough to do to battle our way through since. We cannot say,

“The wars we well remember of King Nine,  
Of old Assaracus and Inachus divine.”

Neither have we any wish: we are contented to read of them 5  
in story, and to stand and gaze at the vast sea of time that  
separates us from them. It was early days then: the world  
was not *well-aired* enough for us: we have no inclination to  
have been up and stirring. We do not consider the six thou-  
sand years of the world before we were born as so much time 10  
lost to us: we are perfectly indifferent about the matter. We  
do not grieve and lament that we did not happen to be in time  
to see the grand mask and pageant of human life going on in  
all that period; though we are mortified at being obliged to  
quit our stand before the rest of the procession passes. 15

It may be suggested in explanation of this difference, that we  
know from various records and traditions what happened in the  
time of Queen Anne, or even in the reigns of the Assyrian  
monarchs: but that we have no means of ascertaining what is  
to happen hereafter but by awaiting the event, and that our 20  
eagerness and curiosity are sharpened in proportion as we are  
in the dark about it. This is not at all the case; for at that  
rate we should be constantly wishing to make a voyage of  
discovery to Greenland or to the Moon, neither of which we  
have, in general, the least desire to do. Neither, in truth, have 25  
we any particular solicitude to pry into the secrets of futurity,  
but as a pretext for prolonging our own existence. It is not so  
much that we care to be alive a hundred or a thousand years  
hence, any more than to have been alive a hundred or a thou-  
sand years ago: but the thing lies here, that we would all of us 30  
wish the present moment to last for ever. We would be as we  
are, and would have the world remain just as it is, to please us.

“The present eye catches the present object”—

to have and to hold while it may; and abhors, on any terms, to have it torn from us, and nothing left in its room. It is the pang of parting, the unloosing our grasp, the breaking asunder some strong tie, the leaving some cherished purpose unfulfilled, 5 that creates the repugnance to go, and "makes calamity of so long life," as it often is.

—— "Oh! thou strong heart!

There's such a covenant 'twixt the world and thee,  
They're loth to break!"

10 The love of life, then, is an habitual attachment, not an abstract principle. Simply *to be* does not "content man's natural desire:" we long to be in a certain time, place, and circumstance. We would much rather be now, "on this bank and shoal of time," than have our choice of any future period, than take a slice of 15 fifty or sixty years out of the Millennium, for instance. This shows that our attachment is not confined either to *being* or to *well-being*; but that we have an inveterate prejudice in favour of our immediate existence, such as it is. The mountaineer will not leave his rock, nor the savage his hut; neither are we will- 20 ing to give up our present mode of life, with all its advantages and disadvantages, for any other that could be substituted for it. No man would, I think, exchange his existence with any other man, however fortunate. We had as lief *not be*, as *not be ourselves*. There are some persons of that reach of soul that 25 they would like to live two hundred and fifty years hence, to see to what height of empire America will have grown up in that period, or whether the English constitution will last so long. These are points beyond me. But I confess I should like to live to see the downfall of the Bourbons. That is a 30 vital question with me; and I should like it the better, the sooner it happens!

No young man ever thinks he shall die. He may believe that others will, or assent to the doctrine that "all men are mortal" as an abstract proposition, but he is far enough from

bringing it home to himself individually.<sup>1</sup> Youth, buoyant activity, and animal spirits, hold absolute antipathy with old age as well as with death; nor have we, in the hey-day of life, any more than in the thoughtlessness of childhood, the remotest conception how

5

“This sensible warm motion can become  
A kneaded clod”—

nor how sanguine, florid health and vigour shall “turn to withered, weak, and grey.” Or if in a moment of idle speculation we indulge in this notion of the close of life as a theory, 10 it is amazing at what a distance it seems; what a long, leisurely interval there is between; what a contrast its slow and solemn approach affords to our present gay dreams of existence! We eye the farthest verge of the horizon, and think what a way we shall have to look back upon ere we arrive at our journey’s 15 end; and without our in the least suspecting it, the mists are at our feet, and the shadows of age encompass us. The two divisions of our lives have melted into each other: the extreme points close and meet with none of that romantic interval stretching out between them, that we had reckoned upon; and for the 20 rich, melancholy, solemn hues of age, “the sear, the yellow leaf,” the deepening shadows of an autumnal evening, we only feel a dank, cold mist, encircling all objects, after the spirit of youth is fled. There is no inducement to look forward; and what is worse, little interest in looking back to what has become so 25 trite and common. The pleasures of our existence have worn themselves out, are “gone into the wastes of time,” or have turned their indifferent side to us: the pains by their repeated blows have worn us out, and have left us neither spirit nor inclination to encounter them again in retrospect. We do not 30 want to rip up old grievances, nor to renew our youth like the phoenix, nor to live our lives twice over. Once is enough.

<sup>1</sup> “All men think all men mortal but themselves.” — YOUNG.

As the tree falls, so let it lie. Shut up the book and close the account once for all !

It has been thought by some that life is like the exploring of a passage that grows narrower and darker the farther we advance, without a possibility of ever turning back, and where we are stifled for want of breath at last. For myself, I do not complain of the greater thickness of the atmosphere as I approach the narrow house. I felt it more, formerly,<sup>1</sup> when the idea alone seemed to suppress a thousand rising hopes and weighed upon the pulses of the blood. At present I rather feel a thinness and want of support, I stretch out my hand to some object and find none, I am too much in a world of abstraction ; the naked map of life is spread out before me, and in the emptiness and desolation I see Death coming to meet me. In my youth I could not behold him for the crowd of objects and feelings, and Hope stood always between us, saying — " Never mind that old fellow ! " If I had lived indeed, I should not care to die. But I do not like a contract of pleasure broken off unfulfilled, a marriage with joy unconsummated, a promise of happiness rescinded. My public and private hopes have been left a ruin, or remain only to mock me. I would wish them to be re-edified. I should like to see some prospect of good to mankind, such as my life began with. I should like to leave some sterling work behind me. I should like to have some friendly hand to consign me to the grave. On these conditions I am ready, if not willing, to depart. I shall then write on my tomb — GRATEFUL AND CONTENTED ! But I have thought and suffered too much to be willing to have thought and suffered in vain.— In looking back, it sometimes appears to me as if I had in a manner slept out my life in a dream or shadow on the side of the hill of knowledge, where I have fed on books,

<sup>1</sup> I remember once, in particular, having this feeling in reading Schiller's *Don Carlos*, where there is a description of death, in a degree that almost stifled me.

on thoughts, on pictures, and only heard in half-murmurs the trampling of busy feet, or the noises of the throng below. Waked out of this dim, twilight existence, and startled with the passing scene, I have felt a wish to descend to the world of realities, and join in the chase. But I fear too late, and that I had 5 better return to my bookish chimeras and indolence once more ! *Zanetto, lascia le donne, et studia la matematica.* I will think of it.

It is not wonderful that the contemplation and fear of death become more familiar to us as we approach nearer to it : that life seems to ebb with the decay of blood and youthful spirits ; 10 and that as we find everything about us subject to chance and change, as our strength and beauty die, as our hopes and passions, our friends and our affections leave us, we begin by degrees to feel ourselves mortal !

I have never seen death but once, and that was in an infant. 15 It is years ago. The look was calm and placid, and the face was fair and firm. It was as if a waxen image had been laid out in the coffin, and strewed with innocent flowers. It was not like death, but more like an image of life ! No breath moved the lips, no pulse stirred, no sight or sound would enter those 20 eyes or ears more. While I looked at it, I saw no pain was there ; it seemed to smile at the short pang of life which was over : but I could not bear the coffin-lid to be closed — it seemed to stifle me ; and still as the nettles wave in a corner of the churchyard over his little grave, the welcome breeze helps to 25 refresh me, and ease the tightness at my breast !

An ivory or marble image, like Chantry's monument of the two children, is contemplated with pure delight. Why do we not grieve and fret that the marble is not alive, or fancy that it has a shortness of breath ? It never was alive ; and it is the 30 difficulty of making the transition from life to death, the struggle between the two in our imagination, that confounds their properties painfully together, and makes us conceive that the infant that is but just dead, still wants to breathe, to enjoy, and look

about it, and is prevented by the icy hand of death, locking up its faculties and benumbing its senses; so that, if it could, it would complain of its own hard state. Perhaps religious considerations reconcile the mind to this change sooner than any  
 5 others, by representing the spirit as fled to another sphere, and leaving the body behind it. So in reflecting on death generally, we mix up the idea of life with it, and thus make it the ghastly monster it is. We think how we should feel, not how the dead feel.

10                   " Still from the tomb the voice of nature cries;  
                       Even in our ashes live their wonted fires!"

There is an admirable passage on this subject in TUCKER'S *Light of Nature Pursued*, which I shall transcribe, as by much the best illustration I can offer of it.

15       " The melancholy appearance of a lifeless body, the mansion provided for it to inhabit, dark, cold, close and solitary, are shocking to the imagination; but it is to the imagination only, not the understanding; for whoever consults this faculty will see at first glance, that there is nothing dismal in all these cir-  
 20 cumstances: if the corpse were kept wrapped up in a warm bed, with a roasting fire in the chamber, it would feel no comfortable warmth therefrom; were store of tapers lighted up as soon as day shuts in, it would see no objects to divert it; were it left at large it would have no liberty, nor if surrounded with  
 25 company would be cheered thereby; neither are the distorted features expressions of pain, uneasiness, or distress. This every one knows, and will readily allow upon being suggested, yet still cannot behold, nor even cast a thought upon those objects with-  
 30 out shuddering; for knowing that a living person must suffer grievously under such appearances, they become habitually formidable to the mind, and strike a mechanical horror, which is increased by the customs of the world around us."

There is usually one pang added voluntarily and unnecessarily to the fear of death, by our affecting to compassionate the loss

which others will have in us. If that were all, we might reasonably set our minds at rest. The pathetic exhortation on country tombstones, "Grieve not for me, my wife and children dear," &c. is for the most part speedily followed to the letter. We do not leave so great a void in society as we are inclined to imagine, 5 partly to magnify our own importance, and partly to console ourselves by sympathy. Even in the same family the gap is not so great; the wound closes up sooner than we should expect. Nay, *our room* is not infrequently thought better than *our company*. People walk along the streets the day after our deaths 10 just as they did before, and the crowd is not diminished. While we were living, the world seemed in a manner to exist only for us, for our delight and amusement, because it contributed to them. But our hearts cease to beat, and it goes on as usual, and thinks no more about us than it did in our life-time. The 15 million are devoid of sentiment, and care as little for you or me as if we belonged to the moon. We live the week over in the Sunday's paper, or are decently interred in some obituary at the month's end! It is not surprising that we are forgotten so soon after we quit this mortal stage: we are scarcely noticed, while 20 we are on it. It is not merely that our names are not known in China — they have hardly been heard of in the next street. We are hand and glove with the universe, and think the obligation is mutual. This is an evident fallacy. If this, however, does not trouble us now, it will not hereafter. A handful of dust can have no 25 quarrel to pick with its neighbours, or complaint to make against Providence, and might well exclaim, if it had but an understanding and a tongue, "Go thy ways, old world, swing round in blue ether, voluble to every age, you and I shall no more jostle!"

It is amazing how soon the rich and titled, and even some of 30 those who have wielded great political power, are forgotten.

"A little rule, a little sway,  
Is all the great and mighty have  
Betwixt the cradle and the grave" —

and, after its short date, they hardly leave a name behind them. "A great man's memory may, at the common rate, survive him half a year." His heirs and successors take his titles, his power, and his wealth—all that made him considerable or courted by  
 5 others; and he has left nothing else behind him either to delight or benefit the world. Posterity are not by any means so disinterested as they are supposed to be. They give their gratitude and admiration only in return for benefits conferred. They cherish the memory of those to whom they are indebted for  
 10 instruction and delight; and they cherish it just in proportion to the instruction and delight they are conscious they receive. The sentiment of admiration springs immediately from this ground, and cannot be otherwise than well founded.<sup>1</sup>

The effeminate clinging to life as such, as a general or abstract  
 15 idea, is the effect of a highly civilised and artificial state of society. Men formerly plunged into all the vicissitudes and dangers of war, or staked their all upon a single die, or some one passion, which if they could not have gratified, life became a burthen to them—now our strongest passion is to think, our chief  
 20 amusement is to read new plays, new poems, new novels, and this we may do at our leisure, in perfect security, *ad infinitum*. If we look into the old histories and romances, before the *belles-lettres* neutralised human affairs and reduced passion to a state of mental equivocation, we find the heroes and heroines not set-  
 25 ting their lives "at a pin's fee," but rather courting opportunities of throwing them away in very wantonness of spirit. They raise their fondness for some favourite pursuit to its height, to a pitch of madness, and think no price too dear to pay for its full

<sup>1</sup> It has been usual to raise a very unjust clamour against the enormous salaries of public singers, actors, and so on. This matter seems reducible to a *moral equation*. They are paid out of money raised by voluntary contributions in the strictest sense; and if they did not bring certain sums into the treasury, the Managers would not engage them. These sums are exactly in proportion to the number of individuals to whom their performance gives an extraordinary degree of pleasure. The talents of a singer, actor, &c. are therefore worth just as much as they will fetch.

gratification. Everything else is dross. They go to death as to a bridal bed, and sacrifice themselves or others without remorse at the shrine of love, of honour, of religion, or any other prevailing feeling. Romeo runs his "seasick, weary bark upon the rocks" of death, the instant he finds himself deprived of his Juliet; and she clasps his neck in their last agonies, and follows him to the same fatal shore. One strong idea takes possession of the mind and overrules every other; and even life itself, joyless without that, becomes an object of indifference or loathing. There is at least more of imagination in such a state of things, more vigour of feeling and promptitude to act than in our lingering, languid, protracted attachment to life for its own poor sake. It is, perhaps, also better, as well as more heroical, to strike at some daring or darling object, and if we fail in that, to take the consequences manfully, than to renew the lease of a tedious, spiritless, charmless existence, merely (as Pierre says) "to lose it afterwards in some vile brawl" for some worthless object. Was there not a spirit of martyrdom as well as a spice of the reckless energy of barbarism in this bold defiance of death? Had not religion something to do with it; the implicit belief in a future life, which rendered this of less value, and embodied something beyond it to the imagination; so that the rough soldier, the infatuated lover, the valorous knight, &c. could afford to throw away the present venture, and take a leap into the arms of futurity, which the modern sceptic shrinks back from, with all his boasted reason and vain philosophy, weaker than a woman! I cannot help thinking so myself; but I have endeavoured to explain this point before, and will not enlarge further on it here.

A life of action and danger moderates the dread of death. It not only gives us fortitude to bear pain, but teaches us at every step the precarious tenure on which we hold our present being. Sedentary and studious men are the most apprehensive on this score. Dr. Johnson was an instance in point. A few years

seemed to him soon over, compared with those sweeping contemplations on time and infinity with which he had been used to pose himself. In the *still-life* of a man of letters, there was no obvious reason for a change. He might sit in an arm-  
5 chair and pour out cups of tea to all eternity. Would it had been possible for him to do so! The most rational cure after all for the inordinate fear of death is to set a just value on life. If we merely wish to continue on the scene to indulge our head-  
strong humours and tormenting passions, we had better begone  
10 at once: and if we only cherish a fondness for existence according to the good we derive from it, the pang we feel at parting with it will not be very severe!

## ON LIVING TO ONE'S-SELF

" Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,  
Or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Po."

I never was in a better place or humour than I am at present for writing on this subject. I have a partridge getting ready for my supper, my fire is blazing on the hearth, the air is mild 5 for the season of the year, I have had but a slight fit of indigestion to-day (the only thing that makes me abhor myself), I have three hours good before me, and therefore I will attempt it. It is as well to do it at once as to have it to do for a week to come. 10

If the writing on this subject is no easy task, the thing itself is a harder one. It asks a troublesome effort to ensure the admiration of others: it is a still greater one to be satisfied with one's own thoughts. As I look from the window at the wide bare heath before me, and through the misty moon-light 15 air see the woods that wave over the top of Winterslow,

" While Heav'n's chancel-vault is blind with sleet,"

my mind takes its flight through too long a series of years, supported only by the patience of thought and secret yearnings after truth and good, for me to be at a loss to understand the 20 feeling I intend to write about; but I do not know that this will enable me to convey it more agreeably to the reader.

Lady G. in a letter to Miss Harriet Byron, assures her that "her brother Sir Charles lived to himself:" and Lady L. soon after (for Richardson was never tired of a good thing) repeats 25 the same observation; to which Miss Byron frequently returns in her answers to both sisters — "For you know Sir Charles

lives to himself," till at length it passes into a proverb among the fair correspondents. This is not, however, an example of what I understand by *living to one's-self*, for Sir Charles Grandison was indeed always thinking of himself; but by this phrase  
5 I mean never thinking at all about one's-self, any more than if there was no such person in existence. The character I speak of is as little of an egotist as possible: Richardson's great favourite was as much of one as possible. Some satirical critic has represented him in Elysium "bowing over the *faded* hand  
10 of Lady Grandison" (Miss Byron that was) — he ought to have been represented bowing over his own hand, for he never admired any one but himself, and was the god of his own idolatry. Neither do I call it living to one's-self to retire into a desert (like the saints and martyrs of old) to be devoured by  
15 wild beasts, nor to descend into a cave to be considered as a hermit, nor to get to the top of a pillar or rock to do fanatic penance and be seen of all men. What I mean by living to one's-self is living in the world, as in it, not of it: it is as if no one knew there was such a person, and you wish no one to  
20 know it: it is to be a silent spectator of the mighty scene of things, not an object of attention or curiosity in it; to take a thoughtful, anxious interest in what is passing in the world, but not to feel the slightest inclination to make or meddle with it. It is such a life as a pure spirit might be supposed to lead, and  
25 such an interest as it might take in the affairs of men, calm, contemplative, passive, distant, touched with pity for their sorrows, smiling at their follies without bitterness, sharing their affections, but not troubled by their passions, not seeking their notice, nor once dreamt of by them. He who lives wisely to himself and  
30 to his own heart, looks at the busy world through the loop-holes of retreat, and does not want to mingle in the fray. "He hears the tumult, and is still." He is not able to mend it, nor willing to mar it. He sees enough in the universe to interest him without putting himself forward to try what he can do to fix the

eyes of the universe upon him. Vain the attempt! He reads the clouds, he looks at the stars, he watches the return of the seasons, the falling leaves of autumn, the perfumed breath of spring, starts with delight at the note of a thrush in a copse near him, sits by the fire, listens to the moaning of the wind, pores upon a book, or discourses the freezing hours away, or melts down hours to minutes in pleasing thought. All this while he is taken up with other things, forgetting himself. He relishes an author's style, without thinking of turning author. He is fond of looking at a print from an old picture in the room, without teasing himself to copy it. He does not fret himself to death with trying to be what he is not, or to do what he cannot. He hardly knows what he is capable of, and is not in the least concerned whether he shall ever make a figure in the world. He feels the truth of the lines —

15

"The man whose eye is ever on himself,  
Doth look on one, the least of nature's works;  
One who might move the wise man to that scorn  
Which wisdom holds unlawful ever" —

he looks out of himself at the wide extended prospect of nature, and takes an interest beyond his narrow pretensions in general humanity. He is free as air, and independent as the wind. Woe be to him when he first begins to think what others say of him. While a man is contented with himself and his own resources, all is well. When he undertakes to play a part on the stage, and to persuade the world to think more about him than they do about themselves, he is got into a track where he will find nothing but briars and thorns, vexation and disappointment. I can speak a little to this point. For many years of my life I did nothing but think. I had nothing else to do but solve some knotty point, or dip in some abstruse author, or look at the sky, or wander by the pebbled sea-side —

"To see the children sporting on the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

I cared for nothing, I wanted nothing. I took my time to consider whatever occurred to me, and was in no hurry to give a sophistical answer to a question — there was no printer's devil waiting for me. I used to write a page or two perhaps in 5 half a year; and remember laughing heartily at the celebrated experimentalist Nicholson, who told me that in twenty years he had written as much as would make three hundred octavo volumes. If I was not a great author, I could read with ever fresh delight, "never ending, still beginning," and had no occa- 10 sion to write a criticism when I had done. If I could not paint like Claude, I could admire "the witchery of the soft blue sky" as I walked out, and was satisfied with the pleasure it gave me. If I was dull, it gave me little concern: if I was lively, I indulged my spirits. I wished well to the world, and believed 15 as favourably of it as I could. I was like a stranger in a foreign land, at which I looked with wonder, curiosity, and delight, without expecting to be an object of attention in return. I had no relations to the state, no duty to perform, no ties to bind me to others: I had neither friend nor mistress, wife or child. 20 I lived in a world of contemplation, and not of action.

This sort of dreaming existence is the best. He who quits it to go in search of realities, generally barter repose for repeated disappointments and vain regrets. His time, thoughts, and feelings are no longer at his own disposal. From that instant 25 he does not survey the objects of nature as they are in themselves, but looks askint at them to see whether he cannot make them the instruments of his ambition, interest, or pleasure; for a candid, undesigning, undisguised simplicity of character, his views become jaundiced, sinister, and double: he takes 30 no farther interest in the great changes of the world but as he has a paltry share in producing them: instead of opening his senses, his understanding, and his heart to the resplendent fabric of the universe, he holds a crooked mirror before his face, in which he may admire his own person and pretensions,

and just glance his eye aside to see whether others are not admiring him too. He no more exists in the impression which "the fair variety of things" makes upon him, softened and subdued by habitual contemplation, but in the feverish sense of his own upstart self-importance. By aiming to fix, he is become 5 the slave of opinion. He is a tool, a part of a machine that never stands still, and is sick and giddy with the ceaseless motion. He has no satisfaction but in the reflection of his own image in the public gaze, but in the repetition of his own name in the public ear. He himself is mixed up with, and spoils 10 every thing. I wonder Buonaparte was not tired of the N. N.'s stuck all over the Louvre and throughout France. Goldsmith (as we all know) when in Holland went out into a balcony with some handsome Englishwomen, and on their being applauded by the spectators, turned round and said peevishly — "There 15 are places where I also am admired." He could not give the craving appetite of an author's vanity one day's respite. I have seen a celebrated talker of our own time turn pale and go out of the room when a showy-looking girl has come into it, who for a moment divided the attention of his hearers. Infinite are 20 the mortifications of the bare attempt to emerge from obscurity ; numberless the failures ; and greater and more galling still the vicissitudes and tormenting accompaniments of success —

"——Whose top to climb  
Is certain falling, or so slippery, that  
The fear's as bad as falling."

25

"Would to God," exclaimed Oliver Cromwell, when he was at at any time thwarted by the Parliament, "that I had remained by my woodside to tend a flock of sheep, rather than have been thrust on such a government as this !" When Buonaparte got 30 into his carriage to proceed on his Russian expedition, carelessly twirling his glove, and singing the air — "Malbrook to the wars is going" — he did not think of the tumble he has got since, the shock of which no one could have stood but himself.

We see and hear chiefly of the favourites of Fortune and the Muse, of great generals, of first-rate actors, of celebrated poets. These are at the head; we are struck with the glittering eminence on which they stand, and long to set out on the same tempting career: — not thinking how many discontented half-pay lieutenants are in vain seeking promotion all their lives, and obliged to put up with “the insolence of office, and the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes;” how many half-starved strolling-players are doomed to penury and tattered robes in country places, dreaming to the last of a London engagement; how many wretched daubers shiver and shake in the ague-fit of alternate hopes and fears, waste and pine away in the atrophy of genius, or else turn drawing-masters, picture-cleaners, or newspaper critics; how many hapless poets have sighed out their souls to the Muse in vain, without ever getting their effusions farther known than the Poet’s-Corner of a country newspaper, and looked and looked with grudging, wistful eyes at the envious horizon that bounded their provincial fame! Suppose an actor, for instance, “after the heart-aches and the thousand natural pangs that flesh is heir to,” *does* get at the top of his profession, he can no longer bear a rival near the throne; to be second or only equal to another, is to be nothing: he starts at the prospect of a successor, and retains the mimic sceptre with a convulsive grasp: perhaps as he is about to seize the first place which he has long had in his eye, an unsuspected competitor steps in before him, and carries off the prize, leaving him to commence his irksome toil again: he is in a state of alarm at every appearance or rumour of the appearance of a new actor: “a mouse that takes up its lodging in a cat’s ear”<sup>1</sup> has a mansion of peace to him: he dreads every hint of an objection, and least of all, can forgive praise mingled with censure: to doubt is to insult, to discriminate is to degrade: he dare hardly look into a criticism unless some

<sup>1</sup> Webster’s Duchess of Malfy.

one has *tasted* it for him, to see that there is no offence in it: if he does not draw crowded houses every night, he can neither eat nor sleep; or if all these terrible inflictions are removed, and he can "eat his meal in peace," he then becomes surfeited with applause and dissatisfied with his profession: he wants to be 5 something else, to be distinguished as an author, a collector, a classical scholar, a man of sense and information, and weighs every word he utters, and half retracts it before he utters it, lest if he were to make the smallest slip of the tongue, it should get buzzed abroad that *Mr. — was only clever as an actor!* 10 If ever there was a man who did not derive more pain than pleasure from his vanity, that man, says Rousseau, was no other than a fool. A country-gentleman near Taunton spent his whole life in making some hundreds of wretched copies of second-rate pictures, which were bought up at his death by a 15 neighbouring Baronet, to whom

"Some demon whisper'd, L——, have a taste!"

A little Wilson in an obscure corner escaped the man of *virtù*, and was carried off by a Bristol picture-dealer for three guineas, while the muddled copies of the owner of the mansion (with 20 the frames) fetched thirty, forty, sixty, a hundred ducats a piece. A friend of mine found a very fine Canaletti in a state of strange disfigurement, with the upper part of the sky smeared over and fantastically variegated with English clouds; and on inquiring of the person to whom it belonged whether some- 25 thing had not been done to it, received for answer "that a gentleman, a great artist in the neighbourhood, had retouched some parts of it." What infatuation! Yet this candidate for the honours of the pencil might probably have made a jovial fox-hunter or respectable justice of the peace, if he could only 30 have stuck to what nature and fortune intended him for. Miss — can by no means be persuaded to quit the boards of the theatre at —, a little country town in the West of

England. Her salary has been abridged, her person ridiculed, her acting laughed at; nothing will serve — she is determined to be an actress, and scorns to return to her former business as a milliner. Shall I go on? An actor in the same company was  
 5 visited by the apothecary of the place in an ague-fit, who on asking his landlady as to his way of life, was told that the poor gentleman was very quiet and gave little trouble, that he generally had a plate of mashed potatoes for his dinner, and lay in bed most of his time, repeating his part. A young couple, every  
 10 way amiable and deserving, were to have been married, and a benefit-play was bespoke by the officers of the regiment quartered there, to defray the expense of a license and of the wedding-ring, but the profits of the night did not amount to the necessary sum, and they have, I fear, “virgined it e’er since!”  
 15 Oh for the pencil of Hogarth or Wilkie to give a view of the comic strength of the company at ———, drawn up in battle-array in the Clandestine Marriage, with a *coup-d’œil* of the pit, boxes, and gallery, to cure for ever the love of the *ideal*, and the desire to shine and make holiday in the eyes of others, instead  
 20 of retiring within ourselves and keeping our wishes and our thoughts at home!

Even in the common affairs of life, in love, friendship, and marriage, how little security have we when we trust our happiness in the hands of others! Most of the friends I have seen  
 25 have turned out the bitterest enemies, or cold, uncomfortable acquaintances. Old companions are like meats served up too often that lose their relish and their wholesomeness. He who looks at beauty to admire, to adore it, who reads of its wondrous power in novels, in poems, or in plays, is not unwise: but let  
 30 no man fall in love, for from that moment he is “the baby of a girl.” I like very well to repeat such lines as these in the play *Mirandola* —

—— “With what a waving air she goes  
 Along the corridor. How like a fawn!

Yet statelier. Hark ! No sound, however soft,  
 Nor gentlest echo telleth when she treads,  
 But every motion of her shape doth seem  
 Hallowed by silence " —

but however beautiful the description, defend me from meeting 5  
 with the original !

" The fly that sips treacle  
 Is lost in the sweets ;  
 So he that tastes woman  
 Ruin meets."

10

The song is Gay's, not mine, and a bitter-sweet it is. — How  
 few out of the infinite number of those that marry and are given  
 in marriage, wed with those they would prefer to all the world ;  
 nay, how far the greater proportion are joined together by mere  
 motives of convenience, accident, recommendation of friends, 15  
 or indeed not unfrequently by the very fear of the event, by  
 repugnance and a sort of fatal fascination : yet the tie is for life,  
 not to be shaken off but with disgrace or death : a man no longer  
 lives to himself, but is a body (as well as mind) chained to an-  
 other, in spite of himself —

20

" Like life and death in disproportion met."

So Milton (perhaps from his own experience) makes Adam  
 exclaim in the vehemence of his despair,

" For either  
 He never shall find out fit mate, but such 25  
 As some misfortune brings him or mistake ;  
 Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain  
 Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd  
 By a far worse ; or if she love, withheld  
 By parents ; or his happiest choice too late 30  
 Shall meet, already link'd and wedlock-bound  
 To a fell adversary, his hate and shame ;  
 Which infinite calamity shall cause  
 To human life, and household peace confound."

If love at first sight were mutual, or to be conciliated by kind 35  
 offices ; if the fondest affection were not so often repaid and

chilled by indifference and scorn ; if so many lovers both before and since the madman in Don Quixote had not " worshipped a statue, hunted the wind, cried aloud to the desert ;" if friendship were lasting ; if merit were renown, and renown were health, riches, and long life ; or if the homage of the world were paid to conscious worth and the true aspirations after excellence, instead of its gaudy signs and outward trappings ; then indeed I might be of opinion that it is better to live to others than one's-self : but as the case stands, I incline to the negative side of the question.<sup>1</sup> —

" I have not loved the world, nor the world me ;  
 I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bow'd  
 To its idolatries a patient knee —  
 Nor coin'd my cheek to smiles — nor cried aloud  
 In worship of an echo ; in the crowd  
 They could not deem me one of such ; I stood  
 Among them, but not of them ; in a shroud  
 Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,  
 Had I not filed my mind which thus itself subdued.  
  
 I have not loved the world, nor the world me —  
 But let us part fair foes ; I do believe,  
 Though I have found them not, that there may be  
 Words which are things — hopes which will not deceive,  
 And virtues which are merciful nor weave  
 Snares for the failing : I would also deem  
 O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve ;  
 That two, or one, are almost what they seem —  
 That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream."

Sweet verse embalms the spirit of sour misanthropy : but woe betide the ignoble prose-writer who should thus dare to compare notes with the world, or tax it roundly with imposture.

<sup>1</sup> Shenstone and Gray were two men, one of whom pretended to live to himself, and the other really did so. Gray shrunk from the public gaze (he did not even like his portrait to be prefixed to his works) into his own thoughts and indolent musings ; Shenstone affected privacy that he might be sought out by the world ; the one courted retirement in order to enjoy leisure and repose, as the other coquetted with it, merely to be interrupted with the importunity of visitors and the flatteries of absent friends.

If I had sufficient provocation to rail at the public, as Ben Jonson did at the audience in the Prologues to his plays, I think I should do it in good set terms, nearly as follows. There is not a more mean, stupid, dastardly, pitiful, selfish, spiteful, envious, ungrateful animal than the Public. It is the greatest of 5 cowards, for it is afraid of itself. From its unwieldy, overgrown dimensions, it dreads the least opposition to it, and shakes like isinglass at the touch of a finger. It starts at its own shadow, like the man in the Hartz mountains, and trembles at the mention of its own name. It has a lion's mouth, the heart of a hare, 10 with ears erect and sleepless eyes. It stands "listening its fears." It is so in awe of its own opinion, that it never dares to form any, but catches up the first idle rumour, lest it should be behind-hand in its judgment, and echoes it till it is deafened with the sound of its own voice. The idea of what the public will think 15 prevents the public from ever thinking at all, and acts as a spell on the exercise of private judgment, so that in short the public ear is at the mercy of the first impudent pretender who chooses to fill it with noisy assertions, or false surmises, or secret whispers. What is said by one is heard by all; the supposition that 20 a thing is known to all the world makes all the world believe it, and the hollow repetition of a vague report drowns the "still, small voice" of reason. We may believe or know that what is said is not true: but we know or fancy that others believe it — we dare not contradict or are too indolent to dispute with them, 25 and therefore give up our internal, and, as we think, our solitary conviction to a sound without substance, without proof, and often without meaning. Nay more, we may believe and know not only that a thing is false, but that others believe and know it to be so, that they are quite as much in the secret of the impos- 30 ture as we are, that they see the puppets at work, the nature of the machinery, and yet if any one has the art or power to get the management of it, he shall keep possession of the public ear by virtue of a cant-phrase or nickname; and by dint of effrontery

and perseverance make all the world believe and repeat what all the world know to be false. The ear is quicker than the judgment. We know that certain things are said; by that circumstance alone, we know that they produce a certain effect on  
5 the imagination of others, and we conform to their prejudices by mechanical sympathy, and for want of sufficient spirit to differ with them. So far then is public opinion from resting on a broad and solid basis, as the aggregate of thought and feeling in a community, that it is slight and shallow and variable to the  
10 last degree—the bubble of the moment—so that we may safely say the public is the dupe of public opinion, not its parent. The public is pusillanimous and cowardly, because it is weak. It knows itself to be a great dunce, and that it has no opinions but upon suggestion. Yet it is unwilling to appear in leading-  
15 strings, and would have it thought that its decisions are as wise as they are weighty. It is hasty in taking up its favourites, more hasty in laying them aside, lest it should be supposed deficient in sagacity in either case. It is generally divided into two strong parties, each of which will allow neither common sense  
20 nor common honesty to the other side. It reads the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews, and believes them both—or if there is a doubt, malice turns the scale. Taylor and Hessey told me that they had sold nearly two editions of the Characters of Shakespeare's Plays in about three months, but that after the Quarterly  
25 Review of them came out, they never sold another copy. The public, enlightened as they are, must have known the meaning of that attack as well as those who made it. It was not ignorance then but cowardice, that led them to give up their own opinion. A crew of mischievous critics at Edinburgh having  
30 affixed the epithet of the *Cockney School* to one or two writers born in the metropolis, all the people in London became afraid of looking into their works, lest they too should be convicted of cockneyism. Oh brave public! This epithet proved too much for one of the writers in question, and stuck like a barbed arrow

in his heart. Poor Keats! What was sport to the town was death to him. Young, sensitive, delicate, he was like

"A bud bit by an envious worm,  
Ere he could spread his sweet leaves to the air,  
Or dedicate his beauty to the sun" —

5

and unable to endure the miscreant cry and idiot laugh, withdrew to sigh his last breath in foreign climes. — The public is as envious and ungrateful as it is ignorant, stupid, and pigeon-livered —

"A huge-sized monster of ingritudes."

10

It reads, it admires, it extols only because it is the fashion, not from any love of the subject or the man. It cries you up or runs you down out of mere caprice and levity. If you have pleased it, it is jealous of its own involuntary acknowledgment of merit, and seizes the first opportunity, the first shabby pre- 15 text, to pick a quarrel with you, and be quits once more. Every petty caviller is erected into a judge, every tale-bearer is implicitly believed. Every little low paltry creature that gaped and wondered only because others did so, is glad to find you (as he thinks) on a level with himself. An author is not then, after 20 all, a being of another order. Public admiration is forced, and goes against the grain. Public obloquy is cordial and sincere: every individual feels his own importance in it. They give you up bound hand and foot into the power of your accusers. To attempt to defend yourself is a high crime and misdemeanour, 25 a contempt of court, an extreme piece of impertinence. Or if you prove every charge unfounded, they never think of retracting their error, or making you amends. It would be a compromise of their dignity; they consider themselves as the party injured, and resent your innocence as an imputation on their 30 judgment. The celebrated Bub Doddington, when out of favour at court, said "he would not *justify* before his sovereign: it was for Majesty to be displeased, and for him to believe himself in

the wrong!" The public are not quite so modest. People already begin to talk of the Scotch Novels as overrated. How then can common authors be supposed to keep their heads long above water? As a general rule, all those who live by the public  
5 starve, and are made a bye-word and a standing jest into the bargain. Posterity is no better (not a bit more enlightened or more liberal), except that you are no longer in their power, and that the voice of common fame saves them the trouble of deciding on your claims. The public now are the posterity of Milton  
10 and Shakespear. Our posterity will be the living public of a future generation. When a man is dead, they put money in his coffin, erect monuments to his memory, and celebrate the anniversary of his birth-day in set speeches. Would they take any notice of him if he were living? No! — I was complaining of  
15 this to a Scotchman who had been attending a dinner and a subscription to raise a monument to Burns. He replied he would sooner subscribe twenty pounds to his monument than have given it him while living; so that if the poet were to come to life again, he would treat him just as he was treated in fact.  
20 This was an honest Scotchman. What *he* said, the rest would do.

Enough: my soul, turn from them, and let me try to regain the obscurity and quiet that I love, "far from the madding strife," in some sequestered corner of my own, or in some far-distant land! In the latter case, I might carry with me as a  
25 consolation the passage in Bolingbroke's *Reflections on Exile*, in which he describes in glowing colours the resources which a man may always find within himself, and of which the world cannot deprive him.

"Believe me, the providence of God has established such an  
30 order in the world, that of all which belongs to us, the least valuable parts can alone fall under the will of others. Whatever is best is safest; lies out of the reach of human power; can neither be given nor taken away. Such is this great and beautiful work of nature, the world. Such is the mind of man, which

contemplates and admires the world whereof it makes the noblest part. These are inseparably ours, and as long as we remain in one we shall enjoy the other. Let us march therefore intrepidly wherever we are led by the course of human accidents. Wherever they lead us, on what coast soever we are thrown by 5 them, we shall not find ourselves absolutely strangers. We shall feel the same revolution of seasons, and the same sun and moon<sup>1</sup> will guide the course of our year. The same azure vault, bespangled with stars, will be every where spread over our heads. There is no part of the world from whence we may not admire 10 those planets which roll, like ours, in different orbits round the same central sun; from whence we may not discover an object still more stupendous, that army of fixed stars hung up in the immense space of the universe, innumerable suns whose beams enlighten and cherish the unknown worlds which roll around 15 them; and whilst I am ravished by such contemplations as these, whilst my soul is thus raised up to heaven, imports me little what ground I tread upon."

<sup>1</sup> "Plut. of Banishment. He compares those who cannot live out of their own country, to the simple people who fancied the moon of Athens was a finer moon than that of Corinth.

——— *Labentem cælo quæ ducitis annum.*

Virg. Georg."

## ON THE PAST AND FUTURE

I have naturally but little imagination, and am not of a very sanguine turn of mind. I have some desire to enjoy the present good, and some fondness for the past ; but I am not at all given to building castles in the air, nor to look forward with much  
5 confidence or hope to the brilliant illusions held out by the future. Hence I have perhaps been led to form a theory, which is very contrary to the common notions and feelings on the subject, and which I will here try to explain as well as I can. — When Sterne in the Sentimental Journey told the French Minister that  
10 if the French people had a fault, it was that they were too serious, the latter replied that if that was his opinion, he must defend it with all his might, for he would have all the world against him ; so I shall have enough to do to get well through the present argument.

15 I cannot see, then, any rational or logical ground for that mighty difference in the value which mankind generally set upon the past and future, as if the one was every thing and the other nothing, of no consequence whatever. On the other hand, I conceive that the past is as real and substantial a part of our  
20 being, that it is as much a *bona fide*, undeniable consideration in the estimate of human life, as the future can possibly be. To say that the past is of no importance, unworthy of a moment's regard, because it has gone by, and is no longer any thing, is an argument that cannot be held to any purpose : for if the past  
25 has ceased to be, and is therefore to be accounted nothing in the scale of good or evil, the future is yet to come, and has never been any thing. Should any one choose to assert that the present only is of any value in a strict and positive sense, because

that alone has a real existence, that we should seize the instant good and give all else to the winds, I can understand what he means (though perhaps he does not himself)<sup>1</sup>: but I cannot comprehend how this distinction between that which has a down-right and sensible, and that which has only a remote and airy 5 existence, can be applied to establish the preference of the future over the past; for both are in this point of view equally ideal, absolutely nothing, except as they are conceived of by the mind's eye, and are thus rendered present to the thoughts and feelings. Nay, the one is even more imaginary, a more fantastic creature 10 of the brain than the other, and the interest we take in it more shadowy and gratuitous; for the future, on which we lay so much stress, may never come to pass at all, that is, may never be embodied into actual existence in the whole course of events, whereas the past has certainly existed once, has received the 15 stamp of truth, and left an image of itself behind. It is so far then placed beyond the possibility of doubt; or as the poet has it,

"Those joys are lodg'd beyond the reach of fate."

It is not, however, attempted to be denied that though the future 20 is nothing at present, and has no immediate interest while we are speaking, yet it is of the utmost consequence in itself, and of the utmost interest to the individual, because it *will have* a real existence, and we have an idea of it as existing in time to come. Well then, the past also has no real existence; the actual 25 sensation and the interest belonging to it are both fled; but it *has had* a real existence, and we can still call up a vivid recollection of it as having once been; and therefore, by parity of reasoning, it is not a thing perfectly insignificant in itself, nor wholly indifferent to the mind, whether it ever was or not. Oh 30

<sup>1</sup> If we take away from *the present* the moment that is just gone by and the moment that is next to come, how much of it will be left for this plain, practical theory to rest upon? Their solid basis of sense and reality will reduce itself to a pin's point, a hair-line, on which our moral balance-masters will have some difficulty to maintain their footing without falling over on either side.

no! Far from it! Let us not rashly quit our hold upon the past, when perhaps there may be little else left to bind us to existence. Is it nothing to have been, and to have been happy or miserable? Or is it a matter of no moment to think whether  
 5 I have been one or the other? Do I delude myself, do I build upon a shadow or a dream, do I dress up in the gaudy garb of idleness and folly a pure fiction, with nothing answering to it in the universe of things and the records of truth, when I look back with fond delight or with tender regret to that which was  
 10 at one time to me *my all*, when I revive the glowing image of some bright reality,

"The thoughts of which can never from my heart"?

Do I then muse on nothing, do I bend my eyes on nothing, when I turn back in fancy to "those suns and skies so pure" that  
 15 lighted up my early path? Is it to think of nothing, to set an idle value upon nothing, to think of all that has happened to me, and of all that can ever interest me? Or, to use the language of a fine poet (who is himself among my earliest and not least painful recollections) —

20 "What though the radiance which was once so bright  
       Be now for ever vanish'd from my sight,  
       Though nothing can bring back the hour  
       Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flow'r" —

yet am I mocked with a lie, when I venture to think of it? Or  
 25 do I not drink in and breathe again the air of heavenly truth, when I but "retrace its footsteps, and its skirts far off adore"? I cannot say with the same poet —

"And see how dark the backward stream,  
 A little moment past so smiling" —

30 for it is the past that gives me most delight and most assurance of reality. What to me constitutes the great charm of the Confessions of Rousseau is their turning so much upon this feeling. He seems to gather up the past moments of his being like drops

of honey-dew to distil a precious liquor from them ; his alternate pleasures and pains are the bead-roll that he tells over, and piously worships ; he makes a rosary of the flowers of hope and fancy that strewed his earliest years. When he begins the last of the Reveries of a Solitary Walker, "*Il y a aujourd'hui, jour des 5 Pâques Fleuris, cinquante ans depuis que j'ai premier vu Madame Warens,*" what a yearning of the soul is implied in that short sentence ! Was all that had happened to him, all that he had thought and felt in that sad interval of time, to be accounted nothing ? Was that long, dim, faded retrospect of years happy 10 or miserable, a blank that was not to make his eyes fail and his heart faint within him in trying to grasp all that had once filled it and that had since vanished, because it was not a prospect into futurity ? Was he wrong in finding more to interest him in it than in the next fifty years — which he did not live to see ; 15 or if he had, what then ? Would they have been worth thinking of, compared with the times of his youth, of his first meeting with Madame Warens, with those times which he has traced with such truth and pure delight "in our heart's tables" ? When "all the life of life was flown," was he not to live the first and best part 20 of it over again, and once more be all that he then was ? — Ye woods that crown the clear lone brow of Norman Court, why do I revisit ye so oft, and feel a soothing consciousness of your presence, but that your high tops waving in the wind recal to me the hours and years that are for ever fled, that ye renew 25 in ceaseless murmurs the story of long-cherished hopes and bitter disappointment, that in your solitudes and tangled wilds I can wander and lose myself as I wander on and am lost in the solitude of my own heart ; and that as your rustling branches give the loud blast to the waste below — borne on the thoughts of 30 other years, I can look down with patient anguish at the cheerless desolation which I feel within ! Without that face pale as the primrose with hyacinthine locks, for ever shunning and for ever haunting me, mocking my waking thoughts as in a dream,

without that smile which my heart could never turn to scorn, without those eyes dark with their own lustre, still bent on mine, and drawing the soul into their liquid mazes like a sea of love, without that name trembling in fancy's ear, without that form  
 5 gliding before me like Oread or Dryad in fabled groves, what should I do, how pass away the listless leaden-footed hours? Then wave, wave on, ye woods of Tuderley, and lift your high tops in the air; my sighs and vows uttered by your mystic voice breathe into me my former being, and enable me to bear the  
 10 thing I am! — The objects that we have known in better days are the main props that sustain the weight of our affections, and give us strength to await our future lot. The future is like a dead wall or a thick mist hiding all objects from our view: the past is alive and stirring with objects, bright or solemn, and of  
 15 unfading interest. What is it in fact that we recur to oftenest? What subjects do we think or talk of? Not the ignorant future, but the well-stored past. Othello, the Moor of Venice, amused himself and his hearers at the house of Signor Brabantio by "running through the story of his life even from his boyish  
 20 days;" and oft "beguiled them of their tears, when he did speak of some disastrous stroke which his youth suffered." This plan of ingratiating himself would not have answered, if the past had been, like the contents of an old almanac, of no use but to be thrown aside and forgotten. What a blank, for  
 25 instance, does the history of the world for the next six thousand years present to the mind, compared with that of the last! All that strikes the imagination or excites any interest in the mighty scene is *what has been!*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A treatise on the Millennium is dull; but who was ever weary of reading the fables of the Golden Age? On my once observing I should like to have been Claude, a person said, "they should not, for that then by this time it would have been all over with them." As if it could possibly signify when we live (save and excepting the present minute), or as if the value of human life decreased or increased with successive centuries. At that rate, we had better have our life still to come at some future period, and so postpone our existence century after century *ad infinitum*.

Neither in itself then, nor as a subject of general contemplation, has the future any advantage over the past. But with respect to our grosser passions and pursuits it has. As far as regards the appeal to the understanding or the imagination, the past is just as good, as real, of as much intrinsic and ostensible value as the future: but there is another principle in the human mind, the principle of action or will; and of this the past has no hold, the future engrosses it entirely to itself. It is this strong lever of the affections that gives so powerful a bias to our sentiments on this subject, and violently transposes the natural order of our associations. We regret the pleasures we have lost, and eagerly anticipate those which are to come: we dwell with satisfaction on the evils from which we have escaped (*Posthac meminisse juvabit*) — and dread future pain. The good that is past is in this sense like money that is spent, which is of no further use, and about which we give ourselves little concern. The good we expect is like a store yet untouched, and in the enjoyment of which we promise ourselves infinite gratification. What has happened to us we think of no consequence: what is to happen to us, of the greatest. Why so? Simply because the one is still in our power, and the other not — because the efforts of the will to bring any object to pass or to prevent it strengthen our attachment or aversion to that object — because the pains and attention bestowed upon any thing add to our interest in it, and because the habitual and earnest pursuit of any end redoubles the ardour of our expectations, and converts the speculative and indolent satisfaction we might otherwise feel in it into real passion. Our regrets, anxiety, and wishes are thrown away upon the past: but the insisting on the importance of the future is of the utmost use in aiding our resolutions, and stimulating our exertions. If the future were no more amenable to our wills than the past; if our precautions, our sanguine schemes, our hopes and fears were of as little avail in the one case as the other; if we could neither soften

our minds to pleasure, nor steel our fortitude to the resistance of pain beforehand ; if all objects drifted along by us like straws or pieces of wood in a river, the will being purely passive, and as little able to avert the future as to arrest the past, we should  
 5 in that case be equally indifferent to both ; that is, we should consider each as they affected the thoughts and imagination with certain sentiments of approbation or regret, but without the importunity of action, the irritation of the will, throwing the whole weight of passion and prejudice into one scale, and leav-  
 10 ing the other quite empty. While the blow is coming, we prepare to meet it, we think to ward off or break its force, we arm ourselves with patience to endure what cannot be avoided, we agitate ourselves with fifty needless alarms about it ; but when the blow is struck, the pang is over, the struggle is no longer necessary,  
 15 and we cease to harass or torment ourselves about it more than we can help. It is not that the one belongs to the future and the other to time past ; but that the one is a subject of action, of uneasy apprehension, of strong passion, and that the other has passed wholly out of the sphere of action, into the region of

20 "Calm contemplation and majestic pains."<sup>1</sup>

It would not give a man more concern to know that he should be put to the rack a year hence, than to recollect that he had been put to it a year ago, but that he hopes to avoid the one, whereas he must sit down patiently under the consciousness of  
 25 the other. In this hope he wears himself out in vain struggles with fate, and puts himself to the rack of his imagination every day he has to live in the mean while. When the event is so remote or so independent of the will as to set aside the necessity of immediate action, or to baffle all attempts to defeat it, it gives

<sup>1</sup> In like manner, though we know that an event must have taken place at a distance, long before we can hear the result, yet as long as we remain in ignorance of it, we irritate ourselves about it, and suffer all the agonies of suspense, as if it was still to come ; but as soon as our uncertainty is removed, our fretful impatience vanishes, we resign ourselves to fate, and make up our minds to what has happened as well as we can.

us little more disturbance or emotion than if it had already taken place, or were something to happen in another state of being, or to an indifferent person. Criminals are observed to grow more anxious as their trial approaches ; but after their sentence is passed, they become tolerably resigned, and generally sleep 5 sound the night before its execution.

It in some measure confirms this theory, that men attach more or less importance to past and future events, according as they are more or less engaged in action and the busy scenes of life. Those who have a fortune to make or are in pursuit of 10 rank and power think little of the past, for it does not contribute greatly to their views : those who have nothing to do but to think, take nearly the same interest in the past as in the future. The contemplation of the one is as delightful and real as that of the other. The season of hope has an end ; but the remem- 15 brance of it is left. The past still lives in the memory of those who have leisure to look back upon the way that they have trod, and can from it "catch glimpses that may make them less forlorn." The turbulence of action, and uneasiness of desire, must point to the future : it is only in the quiet innocence of shep- 20 herds, in the simplicity of pastoral ages, that a tomb was found with this inscription — " I ALSO WAS AN ARCADIAN ! "

Though I by no means think that our habitual attachment to life is in exact proportion to the value of the gift, yet I am not one of those splenetic persons who affect to think it of no value 25 at all. *Que peu de chose est la vie humaine* — is an exclamation in the mouths of moralists and philosophers, to which I cannot agree. It is little, it is short, it is not worth having, if we take the last hour, and leave out all that has gone before, which has been one way of looking at the subject. Such calculators seem 30 to say that life is nothing when it is over, and that may in their sense be true. If the old rule — *Respice finem* — were to be made absolute, and no one could be pronounced fortunate till the day of his death, there are few among us whose existence

would, upon those conditions, be much to be envied. But this is not a fair view of the case. A man's life is his whole life, not the last glimmering snuff of the candle; and this, I say, is considerable, and not *a little matter*, whether we regard its pleasures or its pains. To draw a peevish conclusion to the contrary from our own superannuated desires or forgetful indifference is about as reasonable as to say, a man never was young because he has grown old, or never lived because he is now dead. The length or agreeableness of a journey does not depend on the few last steps of it, nor is the size of a building to be judged of from the last stone that is added to it. It is neither the first nor last hour of our existence, but the space that parts these two — not our exit nor our entrance upon the stage, but what we do, feel, and think while there — that we are to attend to in pronouncing sentence upon it. Indeed it would be easy to shew that it is the very extent of human life, the infinite number of things contained in it, its contradictory and fluctuating interests, the transition from one situation to another, the hours, months, years spent in one fond pursuit after another; that it is, in a word, the length of our common journey and the quantity of events crowded into it, that, baffling the grasp of our actual perception, make it slide from our memory, and dwindle into nothing in its own perspective. It is too mighty for us, and we say it is nothing! It is a speck in our fancy, and yet what canvas would be big enough to hold its striking groups, its endless subjects! It is light as vanity, and yet if all its weary moments, if all its head and heart aches were compressed into one, what fortitude would not be overwhelmed with the blow! What a huge heap, a "huge, dumb heap," of wishes, thoughts, feelings, anxious cares, soothing hopes, loves, joys, friendships, it is composed of! How many ideas and trains of sentiment, long and deep and intense, often pass through the mind in only one day's thinking or reading, for instance! How many such days are there in a year, how

many years in a long life, still occupied with something interesting, still recalling some old impression, still recurring to some difficult question and making progress in it, every step accompanied with a sense of power, and every moment conscious of "the high endeavour or the glad success;" for the mind seizes 5 only on that which keeps it employed, and is wound up to a certain pitch of pleasurable excitement or lively solicitude, by the necessity of its own nature. The division of the map of life into the component parts is beautifully made by King Henry VI.

" Oh God ! methinks it were a happy life	10
To be no better than a homely swain,	
To sit upon a hill as I do now,	
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,	
Thereby to see the minutes how they run ;	
How many make the hour full complete,	15
How many hours bring about the day,	
How many days will finish up the year,	
How many years a mortal man may live :	
When this is known, then to divide the times ;	
So many hours must I tend my flock,	20
So many hours must I take my rest,	
So many hours must I contemplate,	
So many hours must I sport myself ;	
So many days my ewes have been with young,	
So many weeks ere the poor fools will yean,	25
So many months ere I shall shear the fleece :	
So many minutes, hours, weeks, months, and years	
Past over to the end they were created,	
Would bring grey hairs unto a quiet grave."	

I myself am neither a king nor a shepherd : books have been 30 my fleecy charge, and my thoughts have been my subjects. But these have found me sufficient employment at the time, and enough to think of for the time to come.

The passions contract and warp the natural progress of life. They paralyse all of it that is not devoted to their tyranny 35 and caprice. This makes the difference between the laughing innocence of childhood, the pleasantness of youth, and the

crabbedness of age. A load of cares lies like a weight of guilt upon the mind : so that a man of business often has all the air, the distraction and restlessness and hurry of feeling of a criminal. A knowledge of the world takes away the freedom and simplicity of thought as effectually as the contagion of its example. The artlessness and candour of our early years are open to all impressions alike, because the mind is not clogged and pre-occupied with other objects. Our pleasures and our pains come single, make room for one another, and the spring of the mind is fresh and unbroken, its aspect clear and unsullied. Hence "the tear forgot as soon as shed, the sunshine of the breast." But as we advance farther, the will gets greater head. We form violent antipathies, and indulge exclusive preferences. We make up our minds to some one thing, and if we cannot have that, will have nothing. We are wedded to opinion, to fancy, to prejudice ; which destroys the soundness of our judgments and the serenity and buoyancy of our feelings. The chain of habit coils itself round the heart, like a serpent, to gnaw and stifle it. It grows rigid and callous ; and for the softness and elasticity of childhood, full of proud flesh and obstinate tumours. The violence and perversity of our passions comes in more and more to overlay our natural sensibility and well-grounded affections ; and we screw ourselves up to aim only at those things which are neither desirable nor practicable. Thus life passes away in the feverish irritation of pursuit and the certainty of disappointment. By degrees, nothing but this morbid state of feeling satisfies us : and all common pleasures and cheap amusements are sacrificed to the demon of ambition, avarice, or dissipation. The machine is overwrought : the parching heat of the veins dries up and withers the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy ; and any pause, any release from the rack of ecstasy on which we are stretched, seems more insupportable than the pangs which we endure. We are suspended between tormenting desires, and the horrors of *ennui*. The impulse of the will, like the wheels of a carriage

going down hill, becomes too strong for the driver, reason, and cannot be stopped nor kept within bounds. Some idea, some fancy, takes possession of the brain; and however ridiculous, however distressing, however ruinous, haunts us by a sort of fascination through life.

5

Not only is this principle of excessive irritability to be seen at work in our more turbulent passions and pursuits, but even in the formal study of arts and sciences, the same thing takes place, and undermines the repose and happiness of life. The eagerness of pursuit overcomes the satisfaction to result from the accom- 10  
plishment. The mind is overstrained to attain its purpose; and when it is attained, the ease and alacrity necessary to enjoy it are gone. The irritation of action does not cease and go down with the occasion for it; but we are first uneasy to get to the end of our work, and then uneasy for want of something to do. 15  
The ferment of the brain does not of itself subside into pleasure and soft repose. Hence the disposition to strong *stimuli* observable in persons of much intellectual exertion to allay and carry off the over-excitement. The *improvisatori* poets (it is recorded by Spence in his Anecdotes of Pope) cannot sleep after an eve- 20  
ning's continued display of their singular and difficult art. The rhymes keep running in their head in spite of themselves, and will not let them rest. Mechanics and labouring people never know what to do with themselves on a Sunday, though they return to their work with greater spirit for the relief, and look 25  
forward to it with pleasure all the week. Sir Joshua Reynolds was never comfortable out of his painting-room, and died of chagrin and regret, because he could not paint on to the last moment of his life. He used to say that he could go on retouching a picture for ever, as long as it stood on his 30  
easel; but as soon as it was once fairly out of the house, he never wished to see it again. An ingenious artist of our own time has been heard to declare, that if ever the Devil got him into his clutches, he would set him to copy his own

pictures. Thus the secure, self-complacent retrospect to what is done is nothing, while the anxious, uneasy looking forward to what is to come is every thing. We are afraid to dwell upon the past, lest it should retard our future progress; the indul-  
5 gence of ease is fatal to excellence; and to succeed in life, we lose the ends of being!

## ON FAMILIAR STYLE

It is not easy to write a familiar style. Many people mistake a familiar for a vulgar style, and suppose that to write without affectation is to write at random. On the contrary, there is nothing that requires more precision, and, if I may so say, purity of expression, than the style I am speaking of. It utterly rejects 5 not only all unmeaning pomp, but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected, *slipshod* allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combinations we please, but to follow and avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language. 10 To write a genuine familiar or truly English style, is to write as any one would speak in common conversation, who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force, and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes. Or to give another illustration, to write naturally 15 is the same thing in regard to common conversation, as to read naturally is in regard to common speech. It does not follow that it is an easy thing to give the true accent and inflection to the words you utter, because you do not attempt to rise above the level of ordinary life and colloquial speaking. You do not assume 20 indeed the solemnity of the pulpit, or the tone of stage-declamation: neither are you at liberty to gabble on at a venture, without emphasis or discretion, or to resort to vulgar dialect or clownish pronunciation. You must steer a middle course. You are tied down to a given and appropriate articulation, which is 25 determined by the habitual associations between sense and sound, and which you can only hit by entering into the author's meaning, as you must find the proper words and style to express

yourself by fixing your thoughts on the subject you have to write about. Any one may mouth out a passage with a theatrical cadence, or get upon stilts to tell his thoughts : but to write or speak with propriety and simplicity is a more difficult task. Thus  
5 it is easy to affect a pompous style, to use a word twice as big as the thing you want to express : it is not so easy to pitch upon the very word that exactly fits it. Out of eight or ten words equally common, equally intelligible, with nearly equal pretensions, it is a matter of some nicety and discrimination to pick  
10 out the very one, the preferableness of which is scarcely perceptible, but decisive. The reason why I object to Dr. Johnson's style is, that there is no discrimination, no selection, no variety in it. He uses none but "tall, opaque words," taken from the "first row of the rubric : " — words with the greatest number of  
15 syllables, or Latin phrases with merely English terminations. If a fine style depended on this sort of arbitrary pretension, it would be fair to judge of an author's elegance by the measurement of his words, and the substitution of foreign circumlocutions (with no precise associations) for the mother-tongue.<sup>1</sup> How simple is  
20 it to be dignified without ease, to be pompous without meaning ! Surely, it is but a mechanical rule for avoiding what is low to be always pedantic and affected. It is clear you cannot use a vulgar English word, if you never use a common English word at all. A fine tact is shewn in adhering to those which are perfectly  
25 common, and yet never falling into any expressions which are debased by disgusting circumstances, or which owe their signification and point to technical or professional allusions. A truly natural or familiar style can never be quaint or vulgar, for this reason, that it is of universal force and applicability, and that  
30 quaintness and vulgarity arise out of the immediate connection of certain words with coarse and disagreeable, or with confined

<sup>1</sup> I have heard of such a thing as an author, who makes it a rule never to admit a monosyllable into his vapid verse. Yet the charm and sweetness of Marlow's lines depended often on their being made up almost entirely of monosyllables.

ideas. The last form what we understand by *cant* or *slang* phrases. — To give an example of what is not very clear in the general statement. I should say that the phrase *To cut with a knife*, or *To cut a piece of wood*, is perfectly free from vulgarity, because it is perfectly common: but to *cut an acquaintance* is 5 not quite unexceptionable, because it is not perfectly common or intelligible, and has hardly yet escaped out of the limits of slang phraseology. I should hardly therefore use the word in this sense without putting it in italics as a license of expression, to be received *cum grano salis*. All provincial or bye-phrases 10 come under the same mark of reprobation — all such as the writer transfers to the page from his fire-side or a particular *coterie*, or that he invents for his own sole use and convenience. I conceive that words are like money, not the worse for being common, but that it is the stamp of custom alone that gives them 15 circulation or value. I am fastidious in this respect, and would almost as soon coin the currency of the realm as counterfeit the King's English. I never invented or gave a new and unauthorised meaning to any word but one single one (the term *impersonal* applied to feelings) and that was in an abstruse metaphysical 20 discussion to express a very difficult distinction. I have been (I know) loudly accused of revelling in vulgarisms and broken English. I cannot speak to that point: but so far I plead guilty to the determined use of acknowledged idioms and common elliptical expressions. I am not sure that the critics in question 25 know the one from the other, that is, can distinguish any medium between formal pedantry and the most barbarous solecism. As an author, I endeavour to employ plain words and popular modes of construction, as were I a chapman and dealer, I should common weights and measures. 30

The proper force of words lies not in the words themselves, but in their application. A word may be a fine-sounding word, of an unusual length, and very imposing from its learning and novelty, and yet in the connection in which it is introduced,

may be quite pointless and irrelevant. It is not pomp or pretension, but the adaptation of the expression to the idea that clenches a writer's meaning : — as it is not the size or glossiness of the materials, but their being fitted each to its place, that gives  
5 strength to the arch ; or as the pegs and nails are as necessary to the support of the building as the larger timbers, and more so than the mere shewy, unsubstantial ornaments. I hate any thing that occupies more space than it is worth. I hate to see a load of band-boxes go along the street, and I hate to see a  
10 parcel of big words without any thing in them. A person who does not deliberately dispose of all his thoughts alike in cumbersome draperies and flimsy disguises, may strike out twenty varieties of familiar every-day language, each coming somewhat nearer to the feeling he wants to convey, and at last not  
15 hit upon that particular and only one, which may be said to be identical with the exact impression in his mind. This would seem to shew that Mr. Cobbett is hardly right in saying that the first word that occurs is always the best. It may be a very good one ; and yet a better may present itself on reflection or  
20 from time to time. It should be suggested naturally, however, and spontaneously, from a fresh and lively conception of the subject. We seldom succeed by trying at improvement, or by merely substituting one word for another that we are not satisfied with, as we cannot recollect the name of a place or person  
25 by merely plaguing ourselves about it. We wander farther from the point by persisting in a wrong scent ; but it starts up accidentally in the memory when we least expected it, by touching some link in the chain of previous association.

There are those who hoard up and make a cautious display  
30 of nothing but rich and rare phraseology ; — ancient medals, obscure coins, and Spanish pieces of eight. They are very curious to inspect ; but I myself would neither offer nor take them in the course of exchange. A sprinkling of archaisms is not amiss ; but a tissue of obsolete expressions is more fit *for*

*keep than wear.* I do not say I would not use any phrase that had been brought into fashion before the middle or the end of the last century; but I should be shy of using any that had not been employed by any approved author during the whole of that time. Words, like clothes, get old-fashioned, or mean and 5 ridiculous, when they have been for some time laid aside. Mr. Lamb is the only imitator of old English style I can read with pleasure; and he is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his authors, that the idea of imitation is almost done away. There is an inward unction, a marrowy vein both in the thought and 10 feeling, an intuition, deep and lively, of his subject, that carries off any quaintness or awkwardness arising from an antiquated style and dress. The matter is completely his own, though the manner is assumed. Perhaps his ideas are altogether so marked and individual, as to require their point and pungency 15 to be neutralised by the affectation of a singular but traditional form of conveyance. Tricked out in the prevailing costume, they would probably seem more startling and out of the way. The old English authors, Burton, Fuller, Coryate, Sir Thomas Brown, are a kind of mediators between us and the more 20 eccentric and whimsical modern, reconciling us to his peculiarities. I do not however know how far this is the case or not, till he condescends to write like one of us. I must confess that what I like best of his papers under the signature of Elia (still I do not presume, amidst such excellence, to decide what is 25 most excellent) is the account of *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist*, which is also the most free from obsolete allusions and turns of expression —

"A well of native English undefiled."

To those acquainted with his admired prototypes, these Essays 30 of the ingenious and highly gifted author have the same sort of charm and relish, that Erasmus's Colloquies or a fine piece of modern Latin have to the classical scholar. Certainly, I do not

know any borrowed pencil that has more power or felicity of execution than the one of which I have here been speaking.

It is as easy to write a gaudy style without ideas, as it is to spread a pallet of shewy colours, or to smear in a flaunting transparency. "What do you read?"—"Words, words, words."—"What is the matter?"—"Nothing," it might be answered. The florid style is the reverse of the familiar. The last is employed as an unvarnished medium to convey ideas; the first is resorted to as a spangled veil to conceal the want of them.

10 When there is nothing to be set down but words, it costs little to have them fine. Look through the dictionary, and cull out a *florilegium*, rival the *tulippomania*. Rouge high enough, and never mind the natural complexion. The vulgar, who are not in the secret, will admire the look of preternatural health and

15 vigour; and the fashionable, who regard only appearances, will be delighted with the imposition. Keep to your sounding generalities, your tinkling phrases, and all will be well. Swell out an unmeaning truism to a perfect tympany of style. A thought, a distinction is the rock on which all this brittle cargo of verbi-

20 age splits at once. Such writers have merely *verbal* imaginations, that retain nothing but words. Or their puny thoughts have dragon-wings, all green and gold. They soar far above the vulgar failing of the *Sermo humi obrepens*—their most ordinary speech is never short of an hyperbole, splendid, imposing, vague,

25 incomprehensible, magniloquent, a cento of sounding common-places. If some of us, whose "ambition is more lowly," pry a little too narrowly into nooks and corners to pick up a number of "unconsidered trifles," they never once direct their eyes or lift their hands to seize on any but the most gorgeous, tarnished,

30 thread-bare patch-work set of phrases, the left-off finery of poetic extravagance, transmitted down through successive generations of barren pretenders. If they criticise actors and actresses, a huddled phantasmagoria of feathers, spangles, floods of light, and oceans of sound float before their morbid sense, which they

paint in the style of Ancient Pistol. Not a glimpse can you get of the merits or defects of the performers: they are hidden in a profusion of barbarous epithets and wilful rhodomontade. Our hypercritics are not thinking of these little fantoccini beings —

“That strut and fret their hour upon the stage” —

5

but of tall phantoms of words, abstractions, *genera* and *species*, sweeping clauses, periods that unite the Poles, forced alliterations, astounding antitheses —

“And on their pens *Fustian* sits plumed.”

If they describe kings and queens, it is an Eastern pageant. 10  
The Coronation at either House is nothing to it. We get at four repeated images — a curtain, a throne, a sceptre, and a foot-stool. These are with them the wardrobe of a lofty imagination; and they turn their servile strains to servile uses. Do we read a description of pictures? It is not a reflection of 15  
tones and hues which “nature’s own sweet and cunning hand laid on,” but piles of precious stones, rubies, pearls, emeralds, Golconda’s mines, and all the blazonry of art. Such persons are in fact besotted with words, and their brains are turned with the glittering, but empty and sterile phantoms of things. 20  
Personifications, capital letters, seas of sunbeams, visions of glory, shining inscriptions, the figures of a transparency, Britannia with her shield, or Hope leaning on an anchor, make up their stock in trade. They may be considered as *hieroglyphical* writers. Images stand out in their minds isolated and important 25  
merely in themselves, without any ground-work of feeling — there is no context in their imaginations. Words affect them in the same way, by the mere sound, that is, by their possible, not by their actual application to the subject in hand. They are fascinated by first appearances, and have no sense of conse- 30  
quences. Nothing more is meant by them than meets the ear: they understand or feel nothing more than meets their eye. The web and texture of the universe, and of the heart of man, is a

mystery to them: they have no faculty that strikes a chord in unison with it. They cannot get beyond the daubings of fancy, the varnish of sentiment. Objects are not linked to feelings, words to things, but images revolve in splendid mockery, words  
5 represent themselves in their strange rhapsodies. The categories of such a mind are pride and ignorance — pride in outside show, to which they sacrifice every thing, and ignorance of the true worth and hidden structure both of words and things. With a sovereign contempt for what is familiar and natural,  
10 they are the slaves of vulgar affectation — of a routine of high-flown phrases. Scorning to imitate realities, they are unable to invent any thing, to strike out one original idea. They are not copyists of nature, it is true: but they are the poorest of all plagiarists, the plagiarists of words. All is far-fetched,  
15 dear-bought, artificial, oriental in subject and allusion: all is mechanical, conventional, vapid, formal, pedantic in style and execution. They startle and confound the understanding of the reader, by the remoteness and obscurity of their illustrations: they soothe the ear by the monotony of the same everlasting  
20 round of circuitous metaphors. They are the *mock-school* in poetry and prose. They flounder about between fustian in expression, and bathos in sentiment. They tantalise the fancy, but never reach the head nor touch the heart. Their Temple of Fame is like a shadowy structure raised by Dulness to Vanity, or like Cowper's description of the Empress of Russia's  
25 palace of ice, as "worthless as in shew 'twas glittering" —

"It smiled, and it was cold!"

## ON GOING A JOURNEY

One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey; but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out of doors, nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.

"The fields his study, nature was his book."

5

I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticising hedge-rows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places, and carry 10 the metropolis with them. I like more elbow-room, and fewer incumbrances. I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude; nor do I ask for

"——a friend in my retreat,

Whom I may whisper, solitude is sweet."

15

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do, just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters, where Contem- 20 plation

"May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,  
That in the various bustle of resort  
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd,"

that I absent myself from the town for awhile, without feeling 25 at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a post-chaise or in a Tilbury, to exchange good things with, and vary the same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over

my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner — and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point  
5 of yonder rolling cloud, I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sun-burnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like "sunken wrack and sunless treasures," burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again.  
10 Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull common-places, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do; but I sometimes had rather be without them. "Leave,  
15 oh, leave me to my repose!" I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me "very stuff of the conscience." Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment? Does not this daisy leap to my heart set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance  
20 that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better then keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and from thence onward to the far-distant horizon? I should be but bad company all that way, and therefore prefer being alone. I have  
25 heard it said that you may, when the moody fit comes on, walk or ride on by yourself, and indulge your reveries. But this looks like a breach of manners, a neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. "Out upon such half-faced fellowship," say I. I like to be  
30 either entirely to myself, or entirely at the disposal of others; to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary. I was pleased with an observation of Mr. Cobbett's, that "he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an Englishman ought to do only one thing at a

time." So I cannot talk and think, or indulge in melancholy musing and lively conversation by fits and starts. "Let me have a companion of my way," says Sterne, "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines." It is beautifully said: but in my opinion, this continual comparing of 5 notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb show, it is insipid: if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of a pleasure. You cannot read the book of nature, without being perpetually put to the trouble of trans- 10 lating it for the benefit of others. I am for the synthetical method on a journey, in preference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomise them afterwards. I want to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to 15 have them entangled in the briars and thorns of controversy. For once, I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to argue a point with any one for twenty miles of measured road, but not for pleasure. If you 20 remark the scent of a bean-field crossing the road, perhaps your fellow-traveller has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is short-sighted, and has to take out his glass to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the colour of a cloud which hits your fancy, but the effect of which 25 you are unable to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and in the end probably produces ill humour. Now I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them 30 against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you — these may recal a number of objects, and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly

communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company, seems extravagance or affectation ; and, on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, and to make others take an equal interest in it (otherwise the end is not answered) is a task to which few are competent. We must "give it an understanding, but no tongue." My old friend C——, however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale, a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. "He talked far above singing." If I could so clothe my ideas in sounding and flowing words, I might perhaps wish to have some one with me to admire the swelling theme ; or I could be more content, were it possible for me still to hear his echoing voice in the woods of All-Foxden. They had "that fine madness in them which our first poets had ;" and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following.

20                   " — Here be woods as green  
                   As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet  
                   As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet  
                   Face of the curled streams, with flow'rs as many  
                   As the young spring gives, and as choice as any ;  
 25                   Here be all new delights, cool streams and wells,  
                   Arbours o'ergrown with woodbines, caves and dells ;  
                   Choose where thou wilt, whilst I sit by and sing,  
                   Or gather rushes, to make many a ring  
                   For thy long fingers ; tell thee tales of love ;  
 30                   How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,  
                   First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes  
                   She took eternal fire that never dies ;  
                   How she convey'd him softly in a sleep,  
                   His temples bound with poppy, to the steep  
 35                   Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,  
                   Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,  
                   To kiss her sweetest." — "FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS."

Had I words and images at command like these, I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie slumbering on golden ridges in the evening clouds: but at the sight of nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves, like flowers at sunset. I can make nothing out on the spot: — I must have 5 time to collect myself. —

In general, a good thing spoils out-of-door prospects: it should be reserved for Table-talk. L—— is for this reason, I take it, the worst company in the world out of doors; because he is the best within. I grant, there is one subject on which it 10 is pleasant to talk on a journey; and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation, by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavour of the viands we expect at the end of it. 15 How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted just at approach of night-fall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at one's inn!" These eventful 20 moments in our lives' history are too precious, too full of solid, heart-felt happiness to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop: they will do to talk of or to write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking 25 whole goblets of tea,

"The cups that cheer, but not inebriate,"

and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper — eggs and a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal-cutlet! Sancho 30 in such a situation once fixed on cow-heel; and his choice, though he could not help it, is not to be disparaged. Then, in the intervals of pictured scenery and Shandean contemplation,

to catch the preparation and the stir in the kitchen — *Procul, O procul este profani!* These hours are sacred to silence and to musing, to be treasured up in the memory, and to feed the source of smiling thoughts hereafter. I would not waste them  
5 in idle talk; or if I must have the integrity of fancy broken in upon, I would rather it were by a stranger than a friend. A stranger takes his hue and character from the time and place; he is a part of the furniture and costume of an inn. If he is a Quaker, or from the West Riding of Yorkshire, so much  
10 the better. I do not even try to sympathise with him, and he breaks no squares. I associate nothing with my travelling companion but present objects and passing events. In his ignorance of me and my affairs, I in a manner forget myself. But a friend reminds one of other things, rips up old grievances,  
15 and destroys the abstraction of the scene. He comes in ungraciously between us and our imaginary character. Something is dropped in the course of conversation that gives a hint of your profession and pursuits; or from having some one with you that knows the less sublime portions of your history, it seems  
20 that other people do. You are no longer a citizen of the world: but your "unhoused free condition is put into circumspection and confine." The *incognito* of an inn is one of its striking privileges — "lord of one's self, uncumber'd with a name." Oh! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of  
25 public opinion — to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties — to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweet-breads, and to owe nothing but the score of the evening — and no longer seeking for  
30 applause and meeting with contempt, to be known by no other title than *the Gentleman in the parlour!* One may take one's choice of all characters in this romantic state of uncertainty as to one's real pretensions, and become indefinitely respectable and negatively right-worshipful. We baffle prejudice and disappoint

conjecture; and from being so to others, begin to be objects of curiosity and wonder even to ourselves. We are no more those hackneyed common-places that we appear in the world: an inn restores us to the level of nature, and quits scores with society! I have certainly spent some enviable hours at inns — 5 sometimes when I have been left entirely to myself, and have tried to solve some metaphysical problem, as once at Witham-common, where I found out the proof that likeness is not a case of the association of ideas — at other times, when there have been pictures in the room, as at St. Neot's, (I think it was), 10 where I first met with Gribelin's engravings of the Cartoons, into which I entered at once, and at a little inn on the borders of Wales, where there happened to be hanging some of Westall's drawings, which I compared triumphantly (for a theory that I had, not for the admired artist) with the figure of a girl who 15 had ferried me over the Severn, standing up in a boat between me and the twilight — at other times I might mention luxuriating in books, with a peculiar interest in this way, as I remember sitting up half the night to read Paul and Virginia, which I picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched 20 in the rain all day; and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame D'Arblay's Camilla. It was on the 10th of April, 1798, that I sat down to a volume of the New Eloise, at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. The letter I chose was that in which St. Preux 25 describes his feelings as he first caught a glimpse from the heights of the Jura of the Pays de Vaud, which I had brought with me as a *bon bouche* to crown the evening with. It was my birth-day, and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighbourhood to visit this delightful spot. The road to Llan- 30 gollen turns off between Chirk and Wrexham; and on passing a certain point, you come all at once upon the valley, which opens like an amphitheatre, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side, with "green upland swells that echo to the

bleat of flocks " below, and the river Dee babbling over its stony bed in the midst of them. The valley at this time " glittered green with sunny showers," and a budding ash-tree dipped its tender branches in the chiding stream. How proud, how glad  
5 I was to walk along the high road that overlooks the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr. Coleridge's poems ! But besides the prospect which opened beneath my feet, another also opened to my inward sight, a heavenly vision, on which were written, in letters large as  
10 Hope could make them, these four words, LIBERTY, GENIUS, LOVE, VIRTUE ; which have since faded into the light of common day, or mock my idle gaze.

" The beautiful is vanished, and returns not."

Still I would return some time or other to this enchanted spot ;  
15 but I would return to it alone. What other self could I find to share that influx of thoughts, of regret, and delight, the fragments of which I could hardly conjure up to myself, so much have they been broken and defaced ! I could stand on some tall rock, and overlook the precipice of years that separates me  
20 from what I then was. I was at that time going shortly to visit the poet whom I have above named. Where is he now ? Not only I myself have changed ; the world, which was then new to me, has become old and incorrigible. Yet will I turn to thee in thought, O sylvan Dee, in joy, in youth and gladness as thou  
25 then wert ; and thou shalt always be to me the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life freely !

There is hardly anything that shows the short-sightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than travelling does. With change of place we change our ideas ; nay, our opinions  
30 and feelings. We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again ; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The

canvas of the fancy is but of a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions, we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye, we take our fill of it, and seem as if we could form no other image 5 of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it: the horizon that shuts it from our sight, also blots it from our memory like a dream. In travelling through a wild barren country, I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren, like what I 10 see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. "Beyond Hyde Park," says Sir Toppling Flutter, "all is a desert." All that part of the map that we do not see before us is a blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nutshell. It is not one prospect expanded 15 into another, county joined to county, kingdom to kingdom, land to seas, making an image voluminous and vast; — the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written in a map, a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the true signification 20 of that immense mass of territory and population, known by the name of China to us? An inch of paste-board on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange! Things near us are seen of the size of life: things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe 25 by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piece-meal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same 30 time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections, we cannot as it were unfold the whole web of our existence; we must pick out the single threads. So in coming to a place where we have formerly lived and with which we have intimate

associations, every one must have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression: we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names that we had not thought of for years; but for the time all the rest of the world is forgotten! — To return to the question I have quitted above.

I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure, the first consideration always is where we shall go to: in taking a solitary ramble, the question is what we shall meet with by the way. "The mind is its own place;" nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself do the honours indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once took a party to Oxford with no mean *eclat* — shewed them that seat of the Muses at a distance,

"With glistening spires and pinnacles adorn'd" —

descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangles and stone walls of halls and colleges — was at home in the Bodleian; and at Blenheim quite superseded the powdered Ciceroni that attended us, and that pointed in vain with his wand to common-place beauties in matchless pictures. — As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners and notions that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first

a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen: there must be allowed to be something in the view of Athens or old Rome that claims the utterance of speech; and I own that the Pyramids are too 5 mighty for any single contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by one's-self, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet with instant fellowship and support. — Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on 10 the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight. The confused, busy murmur of the place was like oil and wine poured into my ears; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the harbour, as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my 15 soul. I only breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over "the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France," erect and satisfied; for the image of man was not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones: I was at no loss for language, for that of all the great schools of painting was open 20 to me. The whole is vanished like a shade. Pictures, heroes, glory, freedom, all are fled: nothing remains but the Bourbons and the French people! — There is undoubtedly a sensation in travelling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else: but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote 25 from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our 30 old transports revive very keenly, we must "jump" all our present comforts and connexions. Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. Dr. Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in

those who had been abroad. In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful and in one sense instructive; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but  
5 another, and perhaps more enviable individual, all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves, as well as our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings,

“Out of my country and myself I go.”

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts, do well to absent  
10 themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recal them: but we can be said only to fulfil our destiny in the place that gave us birth. I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in travelling abroad, if I could any where borrow another life to spend afterwards at home! —

## MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH POETS

My father was a Dissenting Minister at W——m in Shropshire; and in the year 1798 (the figures that compose that date are to me like the "dreaded name of Demogorgon") Mr. Coleridge came to Shrewsbury, to succeed Mr. Rowe in the spiritual charge of a Unitarian congregation there. He did 5 not come till late on the Saturday afternoon before he was to preach; and Mr. Rowe, who himself went down to the coach in a state of anxiety and expectation, to look for the arrival of his successor, could find no one at all answering the description but a round-faced man in a short black coat (like a shooting- 10 jacket) which hardly seemed to have been made for him, but who seemed to be talking at a great rate to his fellow-passengers. Mr. Rowe had scarce returned to give an account of his disappointment, when the round-faced man in black entered, and dissipated all doubts on the subject, by beginning to talk. 15 He did not cease while he staid; nor has he since, that I know of. He held the good town of Shrewsbury in delightful suspense for three weeks that he remained there, "fluttering the *proud Salopians* like an eagle in a dove-cote;" and the Welch mountains that skirt the horizon with their tempestuous con- 20 fusion, agree to have heard no such mystic sounds since the days of

"High-born Hoel's harp or soft Llewellyn's lay!"

As we passed along between W——m and Shrewsbury, and I eyed their blue tops seen through the wintry branches, or 25 the red rustling leaves of the sturdy oak-trees by the roadside, a sound was in my ears as of a Siren's song; I was stunned, startled with it, as from deep sleep; but I had no notion then that I should ever be able to express my admiration to others

in motley imagery or quaint allusion, till the light of his genius shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the puddles of the road. I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the way-side, crushed, bleeding, lifeless; but  
 5 now, bursting from the deadly bands that "bound them,

"With Styx nine times round them,"

my ideas float on winged words, and as they expand their plumes, catch the golden light of other years. My soul has indeed remained in its original bondage, dark, obscure, with longings  
 10 infinite and unsatisfied; my heart, shut up in the prison-house of this rude clay, has never found, nor will it ever find, a heart to speak to; but that my understanding also did not remain dumb and brutish, or at length found a language to express itself, I owe to Coleridge. But this is not to my purpose.

15 My father lived ten miles from Shrewsbury, and was in the habit of exchanging visits with Mr. Rowe, and with Mr. Jenkins of Whitchurch (nine miles farther on) according to the custom of Dissenting Ministers in each other's neighbourhood. A line of communication is thus established, by which the flame of civil  
 20 and religious liberty is kept alive, and nourishes its smouldering fire unquenchable, like the fires in the Agamemnon of Æschylus, placed at different stations, that waited for ten long years to announce with their blazing pyramids the destruction of Troy. Coleridge had agreed to come over and see my father, according  
 25 to the courtesy of the country, as Mr. Rowe's probable successor; but in the mean time I had gone to hear him preach the Sunday after his arrival. A poet and a philosopher getting up into a Unitarian pulpit to preach the Gospel, was a romance in these degenerate days, a sort of revival of the primitive spirit  
 30 of Christianity, which was not to be resisted.

It was in January, 1798, that I rose one morning before daylight, to walk ten miles in the mud, and went to hear this celebrated person preach. Never, the longest day I have to live, shall

I have such another walk as this cold, raw, comfortless one, in the winter of the year 1798. *Il y a des impressions que ni le tems ni les circonstances peuvent effacer. Dusse-je vivre des siècles entiers, le doux tems de ma jeunesse ne peut renaître pour moi, ni s'effacer jamais dans ma mémoire.* When I got there, the organ was 5 playing the 100th psalm, and, when it was done, Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text, "And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF, ALONE." As he gave out this text, his voice "rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes," and when he came to the two last words, which he pronounced loud, deep, 10 and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. The idea of St. John came into mind, "of one crying in the wilderness, who had his loins girt about, and whose food 15 was locusts and wild honey." The preacher then launched into his subject, like an eagle dallying with the wind. The sermon was upon peace and war; upon church and state — not their alliance, but their separation — on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same, but as opposed to 20 one another. He talked of those who had "inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore." He made a poetical and pastoral excursion, — and to shew the fatal effects of war, drew a striking contrast between the simple shepherd boy, driving his team afield, or sitting under the hawthorn, pip- 25 ing to his flock, "as though he should never be old," and the same poor country-lad, crimped, kidnapped, brought into town, made drunk at an alehouse, turned into a wretched drummer-boy, with his hair sticking on end with powder and pomatum, a long cue at his back, and tricked out in the loathsome finery 30 of the profession of blood.

"Such were the notes our once-lov'd poet sung."

And for myself, I could not have been more delighted if I had

heard the music of the spheres. Poetry and Philosophy had met together, Truth and Genius had embraced, under the eye and with the sanction of Religion. This was even beyond my hopes. I returned home well satisfied. The sun that was still  
 5 labouring pale and wan through the sky, obscured by thick mists, seemed an emblem of the *good cause*; and the cold dank drops of dew that hung half melted on the beard of the thistle, had something genial and refreshing in them; for there was a spirit of hope and youth in all nature, that turned everything  
 10 into good. The face of nature had not then the brand of *JUS DIVINUM* on it:

"Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe."

On the Tuesday following, the half-inspired speaker came. I was called down into the room where he was, and went half-  
 15 hoping, half-afraid. He received me very graciously, and I listened for a long time without uttering a word. I did not suffer in his opinion by my silence. "For those two hours," he afterwards was pleased to say, "he was conversing with W. H.'s forehead!" His appearance was different from what I had  
 20 anticipated from seeing him before. At a distance, and in the dim light of the chapel, there was to me a strange wildness in his aspect, a dusky obscurity, and I thought him pitted with the small-pox. His complexion was at that time clear, and even bright —

25 "As are the children of yon azure sheen."

His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them like a sea with darkened lustre. "A certain tender bloom his face o'erspread," a purple tinge as we see it in the pale  
 30 thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble,

nothing — like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of his face as from a height surveyed and projected him (with sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering purpose, as if Columbus had launched 5 his adventurous course for the New World in a scallop, without oars or compass. So at least I comment on it after the event. Coleridge in his person was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or like Lord Hámlét, “somewhat fat and porsy.” His hair (now, alas! grey) was then black and 10 glossy as the raven’s, and fell in smooth masses over his forehead. This long pendulous hair is peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heavenward; and is traditionally inseparable (though of a different colour) from the pictures of Christ. It ought to belong, as a character, to all who preach *Christ* 15 *crucified*, and Coleridge was at that time one of those!

It was curious to observe the contrast between him and my father, who was a veteran in the cause, and then declining into the vale of years. He had been a poor Irish lad, carefully brought up by his parents, and sent to the University of Glas- 20 gow (where he studied under Adam Smith) to prepare him for his future destination. It was his mother’s proudest wish to see her son a Dissenting Minister. So if we look back to past generations (as far as eye can reach) we see the same hopes, fears, wishes, followed by the same disappointments, throbbing in the 25 human heart; and so we may see them (if we look forward) rising up for ever, and disappearing, like vapourish bubbles, in the human breast! After being tossed about from congregation to congregation in the heats of the Unitarian controversy, and squabbles about the American war, he had been relegated to an 30 obscure village, where he was to spend the last thirty years of his life, far from the only converse that he loved, the talk about disputed texts of Scripture and the cause of civil and religious liberty. Here he passed his days, repining but resigned, in the

study of the Bible, and the perusal of the Commentators, — huge folios, not easily got through, one of which would outlast a winter! Why did he pore on these from morn to night (with the exception of a walk in the fields or a turn in the garden to  
5 gather brocoli-plants or kidney-beans of his own rearing, with no small degree of pride and pleasure)? Here were “no figures nor no fantasies,” — neither poetry nor philosophy — nothing to dazzle, nothing to excite modern curiosity; but to his lack-lustre eyes there appeared, within the pages of the ponderous,  
10 unwieldy, neglected tomes, the sacred name of JEHOVAH in Hebrew capitals: pressed down by the weight of the style, worn to the last fading thinness of the understanding, there were glimpses, glimmering notions of the patriarchal wanderings, with palm-trees hovering in the horizon, and processions of  
15 camels at the distance of three thousand years; there was Moses with the Burning Bush, the number of the Twelve Tribes, types, shadows, glosses on the law and the prophets; there were discussions (dull enough) on the age of Methuselah, a mighty speculation! there were outlines, rude guesses at the shape of  
20 Noah’s Ark and of the riches of Solomon’s Temple; questions as to the date of the creation, predictions of the end of all things; the great lapses of time, the strange mutations of the globe were unfolded with the voluminous leaf, as it turned over; and though the soul might slumber with an hieroglyphic  
25 veil of inscrutable mysteries drawn over it, yet it was in a slumber ill-exchanged for all the sharpened realities of sense, wit, fancy, or reason. My father’s life was comparatively a dream; but it was a dream of infinity and eternity, of death, the resurrection, and a judgment to come!

30 No two individuals were ever more unlike than were the host and his guest. A poet was to my father a sort of nondescript: yet whatever added grace to the Unitarian cause was to him welcome. He could hardly have been more surprised or pleased, if our visitor had worn wings. Indeed, his thoughts had wings;

and as the silken sounds rustled round our little wainscoted parlour, my father threw back his spectacles over his forehead, his white hairs mixing with its sanguine hue; and a smile of delight beamed across his rugged cordial face, to think that Truth had found a new ally in Fancy!<sup>1</sup> Besides, Coleridge 5 seemed to take considerable notice of me, and that of itself was enough. He talked very familiarly, but agreeably, and glanced over a variety of subjects. At dinner-time he grew more animated, and dilated in a very edifying manner on Mary Wolstonecraft and Mackintosh. The last, he said, he considered (on my 10 father's speaking of his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* as a capital performance) as a clever scholastic man — a master of the topics, — or as the ready warehouseman of letters, who knew exactly where to lay his hand on what he wanted, though the goods were not his own. He thought him no match for Burke, either in style 15 or matter. Burke was a metaphysician, Mackintosh a mere logician. Burke was an orator (almost a poet) who reasoned in figures, because he had an eye for nature: Mackintosh, on the other hand, was a rhetorician, who had only an eye to common-places. On this I ventured to say that I had always entertained 20 a great opinion of Burke, and that (as far as I could find) the speaking of him with contempt might be made the test of a vulgar democratical mind. This was the first observation I ever made to Coleridge, and he said it was a very just and striking one. I remember the leg of Welsh mutton and the turnips on 25 the table that day had the finest flavour imaginable. Coleridge added that Mackintosh and Tom Wedgwood (of whom, however, he spoke highly) had expressed a very indifferent opinion of his friend Mr. Wordsworth, on which he remarked to them — "He strides on so far before you, that he dwindles in the 30 distance!" Godwin had once boasted to him of having carried

<sup>1</sup> My father was one of those who mistook his talent after all. He used to be very much dissatisfied that I preferred his Letters to his Sermons. The last were forced and dry; the first came naturally from him. For ease, half-plays on words, and a supine, monkish, indolent pleasantry, I have never seen them equalled.

on an argument with Mackintosh for three hours with dubious success; Coleridge told him — "If there had been a man of genius in the room, he would have settled the question in five minutes." He asked me if I had ever seen Mary Wolstonecraft, 5 and I said, I had once for a few moments, and that she seemed to me to turn off Godwin's objections to something she advanced with quite a playful, easy air. He replied, that "this was only one instance of the ascendancy which people of imagination exercised over those of mere intellect." He did not rate Godwin 10 very high<sup>1</sup> (this was caprice or prejudice, real or affected) but he had a great idea of Mrs. Wolstonecraft's powers of conversation, none at all of her talent for book-making. We talked a little about Holcroft. He had been asked if he was not much struck *with* him, and he said, he thought himself in more danger 15 of being struck *by* him. I complained that he would not let me get on at all, for he required a definition of every the commonest word, exclaiming, "What do you mean by a *sensation*, Sir? What do you mean by an *idea*?" This, Coleridge said, was barricading the road to truth: — it was setting up a turnpike-gate at 20 every step we took. I forget a great number of things, many more than I remember; but the day passed off pleasantly, and the next morning Mr. Coleridge was to return to Shrewsbury. When I came down to breakfast, I found that he had just received a letter from his friend, T. Wedgwood, making him an 25 offer of £150 a-year if he chose to wave his present pursuit, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy. Coleridge seemed to make up his mind to close with this proposal in the act of tying on one of his shoes. It threw an additional damp on his departure. It took the wayward enthusiast quite from us to cast him into Deva's winding vales, or 30 by the shores of old romance. Instead of living at ten miles

<sup>1</sup> He complained in particular of the presumption of his attempting to establish the future immortality of man, "without" (as he said) "knowing what Death was or what Life was" — and the tone in which he pronounced these two words seemed to convey a complete image of both.

distance, of being the pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Shrewsbury, he was henceforth to inhabit the Hill of Parnassus, to be a Shepherd on the Delectable Mountains. Alas! I knew not the way thither, and felt very little gratitude for Mr. Wedgwood's bounty. I was pleasantly relieved from this dilemma; 5 for Mr. Coleridge, asking for a pen and ink, and going to a table to write something on a bit of card, advanced towards me with undulating step, and giving me the precious document, said that that was his address, *Mr. Coleridge, Nether-Stowey, Somersetshire*; and that he should be glad to see me there in a 10 few weeks' time, and, if I chose, would come half-way to meet me. I was not less surprised than the shepherd-boy (this simile is to be found in Cassandra) when he sees a thunder-bolt fall close at his feet. I stammered out my acknowledgments and acceptance of this offer (I thought Mr. Wedgwood's annuity a 15 trifle to it) as well as I could; and this mighty business being settled, the poet-preacher took leave, and I accompanied him six miles on the road. It was a fine morning in the middle of winter, and he talked the whole way. The scholar in Chaucer is described as going

20

—— "Sounding on his way."

So Coleridge went on his. In digressing, in dilating, in passing from subject to subject, he appeared to me to float in air, to slide on ice. He told me in confidence (going along) that he should have preached two sermons before he accepted the situ- 25 ation at Shrewsbury, one on Infant Baptism, the other on the Lord's Supper, shewing that he could not administer either, which would have effectually disqualified him for the object in view. I observed that he continually crossed me on the way by shifting from one side of the foot-path to the other. This struck 30 me as an odd movement; but I did not at that time connect it with any instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle, as I have done since. He seemed unable to keep on in a strait line. He spoke slightly of Hume (whose Essay on Miracles he

said was stolen from an objection started in one of South's Sermons—Credat Judæus Apella!) I was not very much pleased at this account of Hume, for I had just been reading, with infinite relish, that completest of all metaphysical *choke-pears*, his *Treatise on Human Nature*, to which the *Essays*, in point of scholastic subtlety and close reasoning, are mere elegant trifling, light summer-reading. Coleridge even denied the excellence of Hume's general style, which I think betrayed a want of taste or candour. He however made me amends by the manner in which he spoke of Berkeley. He dwelt particularly on his *Essay on Vision* as a masterpiece of analytical reasoning. So it undoubtedly is. He was exceedingly angry with Dr. Johnson for striking the stone with his foot, in allusion to this author's Theory of Matter and Spirit, and saying, "Thus I confute him, Sir."

Coleridge drew a parallel (I don't know how he brought about the connection) between Bishop Berkeley and Tom Paine. He said the one was an instance of a subtle, the other of an acute mind, than which no two things could be more distinct. The one was a shop-boy's quality, the other the characteristic of a philosopher. He considered Bishop Butler as a true philosopher, a profound and conscientious thinker, a genuine reader of nature and his own mind. He did not speak of his *Analogy*, but of his *Sermons at the Rolls' Chapel*, of which I had never heard. Coleridge somehow always contrived to prefer the *unknown* to the *known*. In this instance he was right. The *Analogy* is a tissue of sophistry, of wire-drawn, theological special-pleading; the *Sermons* (with the Preface to them) are in a fine vein of deep, matured reflection, a candid appeal to our observation of human nature, without pedantry and without bias. I told Coleridge I had written a few remarks, and was sometimes foolish enough to believe that I had made a discovery on the same subject (the *Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind*)—and I tried to explain my view of it to Coleridge, who listened with great willingness, but I did not succeed in making

myself understood. I sat down to the task shortly afterwards for the twentieth time, got new pens and paper, determined to make clear work of it, wrote a few meagre sentences in the skeleton-style of a mathematical demonstration, stopped half way down the second page; and, after trying in vain to pump up any words, images, notions, apprehensions, facts, or observations, from that gulph of abstraction in which I had plunged myself for four or five years preceding, gave up the attempt as labour in vain, and shed tears of helpless despondency on the blank unfinished paper. I can write fast enough now. Am I better than I was then? Oh no! One truth discovered, one pang of regret at not being able to express it, is better than all the fluency and flippancy in the world. Would that I could go back to what I then was! Why can we not revive past times as we can revisit old places? If I had the quaint Muse of Sir Philip Sidney to assist me, I would write a *Sonnet to the Road between W——m and Shrewsbury*, and immortalise every step of it by some fond enigmatical conceit. I would swear that the very milestones had ears, and that Harmer-hill stooped with all its pines, to listen to a poet, as he passed! I remember but one other topic of discourse in this walk. He mentioned Paley, praised the naturalness and clearness of his style, but condemned his sentiments, thought him a mere time-serving casuist, and said that "the fact of his work on Moral and Political Philosophy being made a text-book in our Universities was a disgrace to the national character." We parted at the six-mile stone; and I returned homeward, pensive but much pleased. I had met with unexpected notice from a person, whom I believed to have been prejudiced against me. "Kind and affable to me had been his condescension, and should be honoured ever with suitable regard." He was the first poet I had known, and he certainly answered to that inspired name. I had heard a great deal of his powers of conversation, and was not disappointed. In fact, I never met with any thing at all like them, either before or

since. I could easily credit the accounts which were circulated of his holding forth to a large party of ladies and gentlemen, an evening or two before, on the Berkeleian Theory, when he made the whole material universe look like a transparency of fine words; and another story (which I believe he has somewhere told himself) of his being asked to a party at Birmingham, of his smoking tobacco and going to sleep after dinner on a sofa, where the company found him to their no small surprise, which was increased to wonder when he started up of a sudden, and rubbing his eyes, looked about him, and launched into a three-hours' description of the third heaven, of which he had had a dream, very different from Mr. Southey's Vision of Judgment, and also from that other Vision of Judgment, which Mr. Murray, the Secretary of the Bridge-street Junto, has taken into his especial keeping!

On my way back, I had a sound in my ears, it was the voice of Fancy: I had a light before me, it was the face of Poetry. The one still lingers there, the other has not quitted my side! Coleridge in truth met me half-way on the ground of philosophy, or I should not have been won over to his imaginative creed. I had an uneasy, pleasurable sensation all the time, till I was to visit him. During those months the chill breath of winter gave me a welcoming; the vernal air was balm and inspiration to me. The golden sun-sets, the silver star of evening, lighted me on my way to new hopes and prospects. *I was to visit Coleridge in the Spring.* This circumstance was never absent from my thoughts, and mingled with all my feelings. I wrote to him at the time proposed, and received an answer postponing my intended visit for a week or two, but very cordially urging me to complete my promise then. This delay did not damp, but rather increased my ardour. In the mean time I went to Llangollen Vale, by way of initiating myself in the mysteries of natural scenery; and I must say I was enchanted with it. I had been reading Coleridge's description of England, in his fine *Ode*

on the *Departing Year*, and I applied it, *con amore*, to the objects before me. That valley was to me (in a manner) the cradle of a new existence: in the river that winds through it, my spirit was baptised in the waters of Helicon!

I returned home, and soon after set out on my journey with 5 unworn heart and untried feet. My way lay through Worcester and Gloucester, and by Upton, where I thought of Tom Jones and the adventure of the muff. I remember getting completely wet through one day, and stopping at an inn (I think it was at Tewkesbury) where I sat up all night to read Paul and Virginia. 10 Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops 'of pity that fell upon the books I read! I recollect a remark of Coleridge's upon this very book, that nothing could shew the gross indelicacy of French manners and the entire corruption of their imagination more strongly than the 15 behaviour of the heroine in the last fatal scene, who turns away from a person on board the sinking vessel, that offers to save her life, because he has thrown off his clothes to assist him in swimming. Was this a time to think of such a circumstance? I once hinted to Wordsworth, as we were sailing in his boat on 20 Grasmere lake, that I thought he had borrowed the idea of his *Poems on the Naming of Places* from the local inscriptions of the same kind in Paul and Virginia. He did not own the obligation, and stated some distinction without a difference, in defence of his claim to originality. Any the slightest variation would be 25 sufficient for this purpose in his mind; for whatever *he* added or omitted would inevitably be worth all that any one else had done, and contain the marrow of the sentiment. I was still two days before the time fixed for my arrival, for I had taken care to set out early enough. I stopped these two days at Bridge- 30 water, and when I was tired of sauntering on the banks of its muddy river, returned to the inn, and read Camilla. So have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me best. I

have wanted only one thing to make me happy ; but wanting that, have wanted everything !

- I arrived, and was well received. The country about Nether Stowey is beautiful, green and hilly, and near the sea-shore.
- 5 I saw it but the other day, after an interval of twenty years, from a hill near Taunton. How was the map of my life spread out before me, as the map of the country lay at my feet ! In the afternoon Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family-mansion of the St. Aubins, where Wordsworth lived.
- 10 It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet's, who gave him the free use of it. Somehow that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when *nothing was given for nothing*. The mind opened, and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath " the
- 15 scales that fence " our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast ; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the *Lyri-cal Ballads*, which were still in manuscript, or in the form of *Sybilline Leaves*. I dipped into a few of these with great satis-
- 20 faction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family-portraits of the age of George I. and II. and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could

25

—— " hear the loud stag speak."

- In the outset of life (and particularly at this time I felt it so) our imagination has a body to it. We are in a state between sleeping and waking, and have indistinct but glorious glimpses of strange shapes, and there is always something to come better
- 30 than what we see. As in our dreams the fulness of the blood gives warmth and reality to the coinage of the brain, so in youth our ideas are clothed, and fed, and pampered with our good spirits ; we breathe thick with thoughtless happiness, the weight

of future years presses on the strong pulses of the heart, and we repose with undisturbed faith in truth and good. As we advance, we exhaust our fund of enjoyment and of hope. We are no longer wrapped in *lamb's-wool*, lulled in Elysium. As we taste the pleasures of life, their spirit evaporates, the sense 5  
palls; and nothing is left but the phantoms, the lifeless shadows of what *has been!*

That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash-tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud with 10  
a sonorous and musical voice the ballad of *Betty Foy*. I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the *Thorn*, the *Mad Mother*, and the *Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman*, I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since 15  
acknowledged,

"In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,"

as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the 20  
fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of Spring:

"While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed."

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high

"Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate, 25  
Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,"

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or water-fall, gleaming in the summer moonlight! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something cor- 30  
poreal, a *matter-of-fact-ness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not

a spirit that descended to him through the air ; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the gold-finch sang. He said, however (if I remember right) that this objection must be confined to his  
15 descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now.  
10 He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge, in his gait, not unlike his own  
15 Peter Bell. There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance) an intense high narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter  
20 about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantry's bust wants the marking traits ; but he was teased into making it regular and heavy : Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight  
25 of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear, gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*, like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and  
30 said triumphantly that "his marriage with experience had not been so productive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life." He had been to see the *Castle Spectre*, by Monk Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said "it fitted the taste of the audience like a

glove." This *ad captandum* merit was however by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. Wordsworth, looking out of the low, latticed window, said, "How beautifully the sun sets on that yellow bank!" I thought within 5 myself, "With what eyes these poets see nature!" and ever after, when I saw the sun-set stream upon the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, or thanked Mr. Wordsworth for having made one for me! We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the 10 story of Peter Bell in the open air; and the comment made upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, "his face was as a book where men might read strange matters," and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. 15 There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more 20 equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the other more *lyrical*. Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copsewood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and 25 down a strait gravel-walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption. Returning that same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us suc- 30 ceeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible. Thus I passed three weeks at Nether Stowey and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet's friend Tom Poole, sitting

under two fine elm-trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our *flip*. It was agreed, among other things, that we should make a jaunt down the Bristol-Channel, as far as Linton. We set off together on foot, Coleridge, John Chester, and I. This Chester was a native of Nether Stowey, one of those who were attracted to Coleridge's discourse as flies are to honey, or bees in swarming-time to the sound of a brass pan. He "followed in the chace like a dog who hunts, not like one that made up the cry." He had on a brown cloth coat, boots, and corduroy breeches, was low in stature, bow-legged, had a drag in his walk like a drover, which he assisted by a hazel switch, and kept on a sort of trot by the side of Coleridge, like a running footman by a state coach, that he might not lose a syllable or sound, that fell from Coleridge's lips. He told me his private opinion, that Coleridge was a wonderful man. He scarcely opened his lips, much less offered an opinion the whole way: yet of the three, had I to chuse during that journey, I would be John Chester. He afterwards followed Coleridge into Germany, where the Kantian philosophers were puzzled how to bring him under any of their categories. When he sat down at table with his idol, John's felicity was complete; Sir Walter Scott's or Mr. Blackwood's, when they sat down at the same table with the King, was not more so. We passed Dunster on our right, a small town between the brow of a hill and the sea. I remember eying it wistfully as it lay below us: contrasted with the woody scene around, it looked as clear, as pure, as *embrowned* and ideal as any landscape I have seen since, of Gasper Poussin's or Domenichino's. We had a long day's march — (our feet kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue) — through Minehead and by the Blue Anchor, and on to Linton, which we did not reach till near midnight, and where we had some difficulty in making a lodgment. We however knocked the people of the house up at last, and we were repaid for our apprehensions and fatigue by some

excellent rashers of fried bacon and eggs. The view in coming  
 along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles on  
 dark brown heaths overlooking the channel, with the Welsh  
 hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys  
 close by the sea-side, with a smuggler's face scowling by us, and 5  
 then had to ascend conical hills with a path winding up through  
 a coppice to a barren top, like a monk's shaven crown, from  
 one of which I pointed out to Coleridge's notice the bare masts  
 of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon and within the red-  
 orb'd disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship in the 10  
*Ancient Mariner*. At Linton the character of the sea-coast be-  
 comes more marked and rugged. There is a place called the  
*Valley of Rocks* (I suspect this was only the poetical name for  
 it) bedded among precipices overhanging the sea, with rocky  
 caverns beneath, into which the waves dash, and where the sea- 15  
 gull for ever wheels its screaming flight. On the tops of these  
 are huge stones thrown transverse, as if an earthquake had  
 tossed them there, and behind these is a fretwork of perpen-  
 dicular rocks, something like the *Giant's Causeway*. A thunder-  
 storm came on while we were at the inn, and Coleridge was 20  
 running out bareheaded to enjoy the commotion of the elements  
 in the *Valley of Rocks*, but as if in spite, the clouds only mut-  
 tered a few angry sounds, and let fall a few refreshing drops.  
 Coleridge told me that he and Wordsworth were to have made  
 this place the scene of a prose-tale, which was to have been 25  
 in the manner of, but far superior to, the *Death of Abel*, but  
 they had relinquished the design. In the morning of the second  
 day, we breakfasted luxuriously in an old-fashioned parlour, on  
 tea, toast, eggs, and honey, in the very sight of the bee-hives  
 from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and 30  
 wild flowers that had produced it. On this occasion Coleridge  
 spoke of Virgil's Georgics, but not well. I do not think he had  
 much feeling for the classical or elegant. It was in this room  
 that we found a little worn-out copy of the *Seasons*, lying in

a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, "*That* is true fame!" He said Thomson was a great poet, rather than a good one; his style was as meretricious as his thoughts were natural. He spoke of Cowper as the best modern poet. He  
5 said the *Lyrical Ballads* were an experiment about to be tried by him and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had prob-  
10 ably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II. Some comparison was introduced between Shakespear and Milton. He said "he hardly knew which to prefer. Shakespear appeared to him a mere stripling in the art; he was as tall and as strong, with infinitely more activity than  
15 Milton, but he never appeared to have come to man's estate; or if he had, he would not have been a man, but a monster." He spoke with contempt of Gray, and with intolerance of Pope. He did not like the versification of the latter. He observed that "the ears of these couplet-writers might be charged with having  
20 short memories, that could not retain the harmony of whole passages." He thought little of Junius as a writer; he had a dislike of Dr. Johnson; and a much higher opinion of Burke as an orator and politician, than of Fox or Pitt. He however thought him very inferior in richness of style and imagery to  
25 some of our elder prose-writers, particularly Jeremy Taylor. He liked Richardson, but not Fielding; nor could I get him to enter into the merits of *Caleb Williams*.<sup>1</sup> In short, he was profound and discriminating with respect to those authors whom he liked, and where he gave his judgment fair play; capricious,

<sup>1</sup> He had no idea of pictures, of Claude or Raphael, and at this time I had as little as he. He sometimes gives a striking account at present of the Cartoons at Pisa, by Buffamalco and others; of one in particular where Death is seen in the air brandishing his scythe, and the great and mighty of the earth shudder at his approach, while the beggars and the wretched kneel to him as their deliverer. He would of course understand so broad and fine a moral as this at any time.

perverse, and prejudiced in his antipathies and distastes. We loitered on the "ribbed sea-sands," in such talk as this, a whole morning, and I recollect met with a curious sea-weed, of which John Chester told us the country name! A fisherman gave Coleridge an account of a boy that had been drowned the day 5 before, and that they had tried to save him at the risk of their own lives. He said "he did not know how it was that they ventured, but, Sir, we have a *nature* towards one another." This expression, Coleridge remarked to me, was a fine illustration of that theory of disinterestedness which I (in common with Butler) 10 had adopted. I broached to him an argument of mine to prove that *likeness* was not mere association of ideas. I said that the mark in the sand put one in mind of a man's foot, not because it was part of a former impression of a man's foot (for it was quite new) but because it was like the shape of a man's foot. 15 He assented to the justness of this distinction (which I have explained at length elsewhere, for the benefit of the curious), and John Chester listened; not from any interest in the subject, but because he was astonished that I should be able to suggest anything to Coleridge that he did not already know. We re- 20 turned on the third morning, and Coleridge remarked the silent cottage-smoke curling up the valleys where, a few evenings before, we had seen the lights gleaming through the dark.

In a day or two after we arrived at Stowey, we set out, I on my return home, and he for Germany. It was a Sunday morn- 25 ing, and he was to preach that day for Dr. Toulmin of Taunton. I asked him if he had prepared anything for the occasion? He said he had not even thought of the text, but should as soon as we parted. I did not go to hear him, — this was a fault, — but we met in the evening at Bridgewater. The next day we 30 had a long day's walk to Bristol, and sat down, I recollect, by a well-side on the road, to cool ourselves and satisfy our thirst, when Coleridge repeated to me some descriptive lines of his tragedy of Remorse, which I must say became his mouth and

that occasion better than they, some years after, did Mr. Elliston's and the Drury-lane boards, —

"Oh memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,  
And give those scenes thine everlasting life."

5 I saw no more of him for a year or two, during which period he had been wandering in the Hartz Forest in Germany; and his return was cometary, meteorous, unlike his setting out. It was not till some time after that I knew his friends Lamb and Southey. The last always appears to me (as I first saw him)  
10 with a common-place-book under his arm, and the first with a *bon-mot* in his mouth. It was at Godwin's that I met him with Holcroft and Coleridge, where they were disputing fiercely which was the best — *Man as he was, or man as he is to be*. "Give me," says Lamb, "man as he is *not* to be." This saying was  
15 the beginning of a friendship between us, which I believe still continues. — Enough of this for the present.

"But there is matter for another rhyme,  
And I to this may add a second tale."

## MERRY ENGLAND

"St. George for merry England!"

This old-fashioned epithet might be supposed to have been bestowed ironically, or on the old principle — *Ut lucus a non lucendo*. Yet there is something in the sound that hits the fancy, and a sort of truth beyond appearances. To be sure, it is from a dull, homely ground that the gleams of mirth and jollity break out; but the streaks of light that tinge the evening sky are not the less striking on that account. The beams of the morning-sun shining on the lonely glades, or through the idle branches of the tangled forest, the leisure, the freedom, "the pleasure of going and coming without knowing where," the troops of wild deer, the sports of the chase, and other rustic gambols, were sufficient to justify the well-known appellation of "Merry Sherwood," and in like manner, we may apply the phrase to *Merry England*. The smile is not the less sincere because it does not always play upon the cheek; and the jest is not the less welcome, nor the laugh less hearty, because they happen to be a relief from care or leaden-eyed melancholy. The instances are the more precious as they are rare; and we look forward to them with the greater good will, or back upon them with the greater gratitude, as we drain the last drop in the cup with particular relish. If not always gay or in good spirits, we are glad when any occasion draws us out of our natural gloom, and disposed to make the most of it. We may say with *Silence* in the play, "I have been merry ere now," — and this once was to serve him all his life; for he was a person of wonderful silence and gravity, though "he chirped over his cups," and announced with characteristic glee that "there were pippins

and cheese to come." *Silence* was in this sense a merry man, that is, he would be merry if he could, and a very great economy of wit, like a very slender fare, was a banquet to him, from the simplicity of his taste and habits. "Continents," says  
 5 Hobbes, "have most of what they contain"—and in this view it may be contended that the English are the merriest people in the world, since they only show it on high-days and holidays. They are then like a school-boy let loose from school, or like a dog that has slipped his collar. They are not gay like the  
 10 French, who are one eternal smile of self-complacency, tortured into affectation, or spun out into languid indifference, nor are they voluptuous and immersed in sensual indolence, like the Italians; but they have that sort of intermittent, fitful, irregular gaiety, which is neither worn out by habit, nor deadened by  
 15 passion, but is sought with avidity as it takes the mind by surprise, is startled by a sense of oddity and incongruity, indulges its wayward humours or lively impulses, with perfect freedom and lightness of heart, and seizes occasion by the forelock, that it may return to serious business with more cheerfulness, and  
 20 have something to beguile the hours of thought or sadness. I do not see how there can be high spirits without low ones; and every thing has its price according to circumstances. Perhaps we have to pay a heavier tax on pleasure, than some others: what skills it, so long as our good spirits and good hearts enable  
 25 us to bear it?

"They" (the English), says Froissart, "amused themselves sadly after the fashion of their country"—*ils se rejoissoient tristement selon la coutume de leur pays*. They have indeed a way of their own. Their mirth is a relaxation from gravity, a challenge  
 30 to dull care to be gone; and one is not always clear at first, whether the appeal is successful. The cloud may still hang on the brow; the ice may not thaw at once. To help them out in their new character is an act of charity. Any thing short of hanging or drowning is something to begin with. They do not

enter into their amusements the less doggedly because they may plague others. They like a thing the better for hitting them a rap on the knuckles, for making their blood tingle. They do not dance or sing, but they make good cheer — "eat, drink, and are merry." No people are fonder of field-sports, 5 Christmas gambols, or practical jests. Blindman's-buff, hunt-the-slipper, hot-cockles, and snap-dragon, are all approved English games, full of laughable surprises and "hair-breadth 'scapes," and serve to amuse the winter fire-side after the roast-beef and plum-pudding, the spiced ale and roasted crab, thrown (hissing- 10 hot) into the foaming tankard. Punch (not the liquor, but the puppet) is not, I fear, of English origin ; but there is no place, I take it, where he finds himself more at home or meets a more joyous welcome, where he collects greater crowds at the corners of streets, where he opens the eyes or distends the cheeks 15 wider, or where the bangs and blows, the uncouth gestures, ridiculous anger and screaming voice of the chief performer excite more boundless merriment or louder bursts of laughter among all ranks and sorts of people. An English theatre is the very throne of pantomime ; nor do I believe that the gallery and 20 boxes of Drury-lane or Covent-garden filled on the proper occasion with holiday folks (big or little) yield the palm for undisguised, tumultuous, inextinguishable laughter to any spot in Europe. I do not speak of the refinement of the mirth (this is no fastidious speculation) but of its cordiality, on the return 25 of these long looked-for and licensed periods ; and I may add here, by way of illustration, that the English common people are a sort of grown children, spoiled and sulky perhaps, but full of glee and merriment, when their attention is drawn off by some sudden and striking object. The May-pole is almost gone 30 out of fashion among us : but May-day, besides its flowering hawthorns and its pearly dews, has still its boasted exhibition of painted chimney-sweepers and their Jack-o'-the-Green, whose tawdry finery, bedizened faces, unwonted gestures, and

short-lived pleasures call forth good-humoured smiles and looks of sympathy in the spectators. There is no place where trap-ball, fives, prison-base, foot-ball, quoits, bowls are better understood or more successfully practised ; and the very names of a cricket bat and ball make English fingers tingle. What happy days must " Long Robinson " have passed in getting ready his wickets and mending his bats, who when two of the fingers of his right-hand were struck off by the violence of a ball, had a screw fastened to it to hold the bat, and with the other hand still sent the ball thundering against the boards that bounded *Old Lord's cricket-ground* ! What delightful hours must have been his in looking forward to the matches that were to come, in recounting the feats he had performed in those that were past ! I have myself whiled away whole mornings in seeing him strike the ball (like a countryman mowing with a scythe) to the farthest extremity of the smooth, level, sun-burnt ground, and with long, awkward strides count the notches that made victory sure ! Then again, cudgel-playing, quarter-staff, bull and badger-baiting, cock-fighting are almost the peculiar diversions of this island, and often objected to us as barbarous and cruel ; horse-racing is the delight and the ruin of numbers ; and the noble science of boxing is all our own. Foreigners can scarcely understand how we can squeeze pleasure out of this pastime ; the luxury of hard blows given or received ; the joy of the ring ; nor the perseverance of the combatants.<sup>1</sup> The English also excel, or are not excelled

<sup>1</sup> " The gentle and free passage of arms at Ashby " was, we are told, so called by the Chroniclers of the time, on account of the feats of horsemanship and the quantity of knightly blood that was shed. This last circumstance was perhaps necessary to qualify it with the epithet of " gentle," in the opinion of some of these historians. I think the reason why the English are the bravest nation on earth is, that the thought of blood or a delight in cruelty is not the chief excitement with them. Where it is, there is necessarily a *reaction* ; for though it may add to our eagerness and savage ferocity in inflicting wounds, it does not enable us to endure them with greater patience. The English are led to the attack or sustain it equally well, because they fight as they box, not out of malice, but to show *pluck* and manhood. *Fair play and old England for ever* ! This is the only bravery that will stand the test. There is the same determination and spirit shown

in wiring a hare, in stalking a deer, in shooting, fishing, and hunting. England to this day boasts her Robin Hood and his merry men, that stout archer and outlaw, and patron-saint of the sporting-calendar. What a cheerful sound is that of the hunters, issuing from the autumnal wood and sweeping over 5 hill and dale!

— "A cry more tuneable  
Was never halloo'd to by hound or horn."

What sparkling richness in the scarlet coats of the riders, what a glittering confusion in the pack, what spirit in the horses, what 10 eagerness in the followers on foot, as they disperse over the plain, or force their way over hedge and ditch! Surely, the coloured prints and pictures of these, hung up in gentlemen's halls and village alehouses, however humble as works of art, have more life and health and spirit in them, and mark the pith 15 and nerve of the national character more creditably than the mawkish, sentimental, affected designs of Theseus and Pirithous, and Æneas and Dido, pasted on foreign *salons à manger*, and the interior of country-houses. If our tastes are not epic, nor our pretensions lofty, they are simple and our own; and we 20 may possibly enjoy our native rural sports, and the rude remembrances of them, with the truer relish on this account, that they are suited to us and we to them. The English nation, too, are naturally "brothers of the angle." This pursuit implies just that mixture of patience and pastime, of vacancy and thoughtfulness, 25 of idleness and business, of pleasure and of pain, which is suited in resistance as in attack; but not the same pleasure in getting a cut with a sabre as in giving one. There is, therefore, always a certain degree of effeminacy mixed up with any approach to cruelty, since both have their source in the same principle, viz. an over-valuing of pain (*a*). This was the reason the French (having the best cause and the best general in the world) ran away at Waterloo, because they were inflamed, furious, drunk with the blood of their enemies, but when it came to their turn, wanting the same stimulus, they were panic-struck, and their hearts and their senses failed them all at once.

(*a*) Vanity is the same half-witted principle, compared with pride. It leaves men in the lurch when it is most needed; is mortified at being reduced to stand on the defensive, and relinquishes the field to its more surly antagonist.

to the genius of an Englishman, and as I suspect, of no one else in the same degree. He is eminently gifted to stand in the situation assigned by Dr. Johnson to the angler, "at one end of a rod with a worm at the other." I should suppose no other language can show such a book as an often-mentioned one, Walton's Complete Angler, — so full of *naïveté*, of unaffected sprightliness, of busy trifling, of dainty songs, of refreshing brooks, of shady arbours, of happy thoughts and of the herb called *Heart's Ease*! Some persons can see neither the wit nor wisdom of this genuine volume, as if a book as well as a man might not have a personal character belonging to it, amiable, venerable from the spirit of joy and thorough goodness it manifests, independently of acute remarks or scientific discoveries: others object to the cruelty of Walton's theory and practice of trout-fishing — for my part, I should as soon charge an infant with cruelty for killing a fly, and I feel the same sort of pleasure in reading his book as I should have done in the company of this happy, child-like old man, watching his ruddy cheek, his laughing eye, the kindness of his heart, and the dexterity of his hand in seizing his finny prey! It must be confessed, there is often an odd sort of *materiality* in English sports and recreations. I have known several persons, whose existence consisted wholly in manual exercises, and all whose enjoyments lay at their finger-ends. Their greatest happiness was in cutting a stick, in mending a cabbage-net, in digging a hole in the ground, in hitting a mark, turning a lathe, or in something else of the same kind, at which they had a certain *knack*. Well is it when we can amuse ourselves with such trifles and without injury to others! This class of character, which the Spectator has immortalised in the person of Will Wimble, is still common among younger brothers and retired gentlemen of small incomes in town or country. The *Cockney* character is of our English growth, as this intimates a feverish fidgety delight in rural sights and sounds, and a longing wish, after the turmoil and confinement of a city-life, to transport

one's-self to the freedom and breathing sweetness of a country retreat. London is half suburbs. The suburbs of Paris are a desert, and you see nothing but crazy wind-mills, stone-walls, and a few straggling visitants in spots where in England you would find a thousand villas, a thousand terraces crowned with their own delights, or be stunned with the noise of bowling-greens and tea-gardens, or stifled with the fumes of tobacco mingling with fragrant shrubs, or the clouds of dust raised by half the population of the metropolis panting and toiling in search of a mouthful of fresh air. The Parisian is, perhaps, as well (or better) contented with himself wherever he is, stewed in his shop or his garret; the Londoner is miserable in these circumstances, and glad to escape from them.<sup>1</sup> Let no one object to the gloomy appearance of a London Sunday, compared with a Parisian one. It is a part of our politics and our religion: we would not have James the First's Book of Sports thrust down our throats: and besides, it is a part of our character to do one thing at a time, and not to be dancing a jig and on our knees in the same breath. It is true the Englishman spends his Sunday evening at the ale-house —

20

"And e'en on Sunday  
Drank with Kirton Jean till Monday" —

but he only unbends and waxes mellow by degrees, and sits soaking till he can neither sit, stand, nor go: it is his vice, and a beastly one it is, but not a proof of any inherent distaste to mirth or good-fellowship. Neither can foreigners throw the carnival in our teeth with any effect: those who have seen it (at Florence, for example,) will say that it is duller than any thing in England. Our Bartholomew-Fair is Queen Mab herself to it! What can be duller than a parcel of masks moving about the streets and looking as grave and monotonous as possible from day to day, and with the same lifeless formality in their limbs

<sup>1</sup> The English are fond of change of scene; the French of change of posture; the Italians like to sit still and do nothing.

and gestures as in their features? One might as well expect variety and spirit in a procession of waxwork. We must be hard run indeed, when we have recourse to a pasteboard proxy to set off our mirth: a mask may be a very good cover for licentiousness (though of that I saw no signs), but is a very bad exponent of wit and humour. I should suppose there is more drollery and unction in the caricatures in Gilray's shop-window, than in all the masks in Italy, without exception.<sup>1</sup>

The humour of English writing and description has often been wondered at; and it flows from the same source as the merry *traits* of our character. A degree of barbarism and rusticity seems necessary to the perfection of humour. The droll and laughable depend on peculiarity and incongruity of character. But with the progress of refinement, the peculiarities of individuals and of classes wear out or lose their sharp, abrupt edges; nay, a certain slowness and dulness of understanding is required to be struck with odd and unaccountable appearances, for which a greater facility of apprehension can sooner assign an explanation that breaks the force of the seeming absurdity, and to which a wider scope of imagination is more easily reconciled. Clowns and country people are more amused, are more disposed to laugh and make sport of the dress of strangers, because from their ignorance the surprise is greater, and they cannot conceive any thing to be natural or proper to which they are unused. Without a given portion of hardness and repulsiveness of feeling the ludicrous cannot well exist. Wonder, and curiosity, the attributes of inexperience, enter greatly into its composition. Now it appears to me that the English are (or were) just at that mean point between intelligence and obtuseness, which must produce the most abundant and happiest crop of humour.

<sup>1</sup> Bells are peculiar to England. They jingle them in Italy during the carnival as boys do with us at Shrovetide; but they have no notion of ringing them. The sound of village bells never cheers you in travelling, nor have you the lute or cittern in their stead. Yet the expression of "Merry Bells" is a favourite, and not one of the least appropriate in our language.

Absurdity and singularity glide over the French mind without jarring or jostling with it; or they evaporate in levity: — with the Italians they are lost in indolence or pleasure. The ludicrous takes hold of the English imagination, and clings to it with all its ramifications. We resent any difference or peculiarity of appearance at first, and yet, having not much malice at our hearts, we are glad to turn it into a jest — we are liable to be offended, and as willing to be pleased — struck with oddity from not knowing what to make of it, we wonder and burst out a laughing at the eccentricity of others, while we follow our own bent from wilfulness or simplicity, and thus afford them, in our turn, matter for the indulgence of the comic vein. It is possible that a greater refinement of manners may give birth to finer distinctions of satire and a nicer tact for the ridiculous: but our insular situation and character are, I should say, most likely to foster, as they have in fact fostered, the greatest quantity of natural and striking humour, in spite of our plodding tenaciousness, and want both of gaiety and quickness of perception. A set of raw recruits with their awkward movements and unbending joints are laughable enough: but they cease to be so, when they have once been drilled into discipline and uniformity. So it is with nations that lose their angular points and grotesque qualities with education and intercourse: but it is in a mixed state of manners that comic humour chiefly flourishes, for, in order that the drollery may not be lost, we must have spectators of the passing scene who are able to appreciate and embody its most remarkable features, — wits as well as *butts* for ridicule. I shall mention two names in this department which may serve to redeem the national character from absolute dulness and solemn pretence, — Fielding and Hogarth. These were thorough specimens of true English humour; yet both were grave men. In reality, too high a pitch of animal spirits runs away with the imagination, instead of helping it to reach the goal; is inclined to take the jest for granted when it ought to work it out with

patient and marked touches, and it ends in vapid flippancy and impertinence. Among our neighbours on the Continent, Moliere and Rabelais carried the freedom of wit and humour to an almost incredible height; but they rather belonged to the old  
 5 French school, and even approach and exceed the English licence and extravagance of conception. I do not consider Congreve's wit (though it belongs to us) as coming under the article here spoken of; for his genius is any thing but *merry*. Lord Byron was in the habit of railing at the spirit of our good old comedy,  
 10 and of abusing Shakspeare's Clowns and Fools, which he said the refinement of the French and Italian stage would not endure and which only our grossness and puerile taste could tolerate. In this I agree with him; and it is *pat* to my purpose. I flatter myself that we are almost the only people who understand and  
 15 relish *nonsense*. We are not "merry and wise," but indulge our mirth to excess and folly. When we trifle, we trifle in good earnest; and having once relaxed our hold of the helm, drift idly down the stream, and delighted with the change, are tossed about "by every little breath" of whim or caprice,

20

"That under Heaven is blown."

All we then want is to proclaim a truce with reason, and to be pleased with as little expense of thought or pretension to wisdom as possible. This licensed fooling is carried to its very utmost length in Shakspeare, and in some other of our elder dramatists,  
 25 without, perhaps, sufficient warrant or the same excuse. Nothing can justify this extreme relaxation but extreme tension. Shakspeare's trifling does indeed tread upon the very borders of vacancy: his meaning often hangs by the very slenderest threads. For this he might be blamed if it did not take away  
 30 our breath to follow his eagle flights, or if he did not at other times make the cordage of our hearts crack. After our heads ache with thinking, it is fair to play the fool. The clowns were as proper an appendage to the gravity of our antique literature,

as fools and dwarfs were to the stately dignity of courts and noble houses in former days. Of all people, they have the best right to claim a total exemption from rules and rigid formality, who, when they have any thing of importance to do, set about it with the greatest earnestness and perseverance, and are generally grave and sober to a proverb.<sup>1</sup> Poor Swift, who wrote more idle or *nonsense* verses than any man, was the severest of moralists; and his feelings and observations morbidly acute. Did not Lord Byron himself follow up his *Childe Harold* with his *Don Juan*? — not that I insist on what he did as any illustration of the English character. He was one of the English Nobility, not one of the English People; and his occasional ease and familiarity were in my mind equally constrained and affected, whether in relation to the pretensions of his rank or the efforts of his genius.

15

They ask you in France, how you pass your time in England without amusements; and can with difficulty believe that there are theatres in London, still less that they are larger and handsomer than those in Paris. That we should have comic actors, “they own, surprises them.” They judge of the English character in the lump as one great jolter-head, containing all the stupidity of the country, as the large ball at the top of the Dispensary in Warwick-lane, from its resemblance to a gilded pill, has been made to represent the whole pharmacopœia and professional quackery of the kingdom. They have no more notion, for instance, how we should have such an actor as Liston on our stage, than if we were to tell them we have parts performed by a sea-otter; nor if they were to see him, would they be much the wiser, or know what to think of his unaccountable twitches of countenance or non-descript gestures, of his teeth chattering in his head, his eyes that seem dropping from their sockets, his nose that is tickled by a jest as by a feather, and shining with

<sup>1</sup>The strict formality of French serious writing is resorted to as a foil to the natural levity of their character.

self-complacency as if oiled, his ignorant conceit, his gaping stupor, his lumpish vivacity in Lubin Log or Tony Lumpkin; for as our rivals do not wind up the machine to such a determined intensity of purpose, neither have they any idea of its running down to such degrees of imbecility and folly, or coming to an absolute *stand-still* and lack of meaning, nor can they enter into or be amused with the contrast. No people ever laugh heartily who can give a reason for their doing so: and I believe the English in general are not yet in this predicament.

10 They are not metaphysical, but very much in a state of nature; and this is one main ground why I give them credit for being merry, notwithstanding appearances. Their mirth is not the mirth of vice or desperation, but of innocence and a native wildness. They do not cavil or boggle at niceties, or merely

15 come to the edge of a joke, but break their necks over it with a wanton "Here goes," where others make a *pirouette* and stand upon decorum. The French cannot, however, be persuaded of the excellence of our comic stage, nor of the store we set by it. When they ask what amusements we have, it is

20 plain they can never have heard of Mrs. Jordan, nor King, nor Bannister, nor Suett, nor Munden, nor Lewis, nor little Simmons, nor Dodd, and Parsons, and Emery, and Miss Pope, and Miss Farren, and all those who even in my time have gladdened a nation and "made life's business like a summer's dream." Can

25 I think of them, and of their names that glittered in the play-bills when I was young, exciting all the flutter of hope and expectation of seeing them in their favourite parts of Nell, or Little Pickle, or Touchstone, or Sir Peter Teazle, or Lenitive in the Prize, or Lingo, or Crabtree, or Nipperkin, or old Dorn-

30 ton, or Ranger, or the Copper Captain, or Lord Sands, or Filch, or Moses, or Sir Andrew Aguecheek, or Acres, or Elbow, or Hodge, or Flora, or the Duenna, or Lady Teazle, or Lady Grace, or of the gaiety that sparkled in all eyes, and the

delight that overflowed all hearts, as they glanced before us in these parts,

“Throwing a gaudy shadow upon life,” —

and not feel my heart yearn within me, or couple the thoughts of England and the spleen together? Our cloud has at least its 5 rainbow tints: ours is not one long polar night of cold and dullness, but we have the gleaming lights of fancy to amuse us, the household fires of truth and genius to warm us. We can go to a play and see Liston; or stay at home and read Roderick Random; or have Hogarth's prints of *Marriage à la Mode* 10 hanging round our room. “Tut! there's livers even in England,” as well as “out of it.” We are not quite the *forlorn hope* of humanity, the last of nations. The French look at us across the Channel, and seeing nothing but water and a cloudy mist, think that this is England. 15

—— “What's our Britain

In the world's volume? In a great pool a swan's nest.”

If they have any farther idea of us, it is of George III. and our Jack tars, the House of Lords and House of Commons, and this is no great addition to us. To go beyond this, to talk of 20 arts and elegances as having taken up their abode here, or to say that Mrs. Abington was equal to Mademoiselle Mars, and that we at one time got up the School for Scandal, as they do the Misanthrope, is to persuade them that Iceland is a pleasant summer-retreat, or to recommend the whale-fishery as a clas- 25 sical amusement. The French are the *cockneys* of Europe, and have no idea how any one can exist out of Paris, or be alive without incessant grimace and *jabber*. Yet what imports it? What! though the joyous train I have just enumerated were, perhaps, never heard of in the precincts of the Palais-Royal, is 30 it not enough that they gave pleasure where they were, to those who saw and heard them? Must our laugh, to be sincere, have

its echo on the other side of the water? Had not the French their favourites and their enjoyments at the time, that we knew nothing of? Why then should we not have ours (and boast of them too) without their leave? A monopoly of self-conceit is  
5 not a monopoly of all other advantages. The English, when they go abroad, do not take away the prejudice against them by their looks. We seem duller and sadder than we are. As I write this, I am sitting in the open air in a beautiful valley near Vevey: Clarens is on my left, the Dent de Jamant is behind  
10 me, the rocks of Meillerie opposite: under my feet is a green bank, enamelled with white and purple flowers, in which a dew-drop here and there still glitters with pearly light —

“And gaudy butterflies flutter around.”

Intent upon the scene and upon the thoughts that stir within  
15 me, I conjure up the cheerful passages of my life, and a crowd of happy images appear before me. No one would see it in my looks — my eyes grow dull and fixed, and I seem rooted to the spot, as all this phantasmagoria passes in review before me, glancing a reflex lustre on the face of the world and nature.  
20 But the traces of pleasure, in my case, sink into an absorbent ground of thoughtful melancholy, and require to be brought out by time and circumstances, or (as the critics tell you) by the *varnish* of style!

The *comfort*, on which the English lay so much stress, is of the  
25 same character, and arises from the same source as their mirth. Both exist by contrast and a sort of contradiction. The English are certainly the most uncomfortable of all people in themselves, and therefore it is that they stand in need of every kind of comfort and accommodation. The least thing puts them out of  
30 their way, and therefore every thing must be in its place. They are mightily offended at disagreeable tastes and smells, and therefore they exact the utmost neatness and nicety. They are sensible of heat and cold, and therefore they cannot exist, unless

every thing is snug and warm, or else open and airy, where they are. They must have "all appliances and means to boot." They are afraid of interruption and intrusion, and therefore they shut themselves up in in-door enjoyments and by their own firesides. It is not that they require luxuries (for that im- 5 plies a high degree of epicurean indulgence and gratification), but they cannot do without *their comforts*; that is, whatever tends to supply their physical wants, and ward off physical pain and annoyance. As they have not a fund of animal spirits and enjoyments in themselves, they cling to external objects for 10 support, and derive solid satisfaction from the ideas of order, cleanliness, plenty, property, and domestic quiet, as they seek for diversion from odd accidents and grotesque surprises, and have the highest possible relish not of voluptuous softness, but of hard knocks and dry blows, as one means of ascertaining 15 their personal identity.

## OF PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO HAVE SEEN

"Come like shadows — so depart."

B—— it was, I think, who suggested this subject, as well as the defence of Guy Faux, which I urged him to execute. As, however, he would undertake neither, I suppose I must do both  
5 — a task for which he would have been much fitter, no less from the temerity than the felicity of his pen —

"Never so sure our rapture to create  
As when it touch'd the brink of all we hate."

Compared with him, I shall, I fear, make but a common-place  
10 piece of business of it; but I should be loth the idea was entirely lost, and besides, I may avail myself of some hints of his in the progress of it. I am sometimes, I suspect, a better reporter of the ideas of other people than expounder of my own. I pursue the one too far into paradox or mysticism; the others I am  
15 not bound to follow farther than I like, or than seems fair and reasonable.

On the question being started, A—— said, "I suppose the two first persons you would choose to see would be the two greatest names in English literature, Sir Isaac Newton and Mr.  
20 Locke?" In this A——, as usual, reckoned without his host. Every one burst out a laughing at the expression of B——'s face, in which impatience was restrained by courtesy. "Yes, the greatest names," he stammered out hastily, "but they were not persons — not persons." — "Not persons?" said  
25 A——, looking wise and foolish at the same time, afraid his triumph might be premature. "That is," rejoined B——, "not

characters, you know. By Mr. Locke and Sir Isaac Newton, you mean the Essay on the Human Understanding, and the Principia, which we have to this day. Beyond their contents there is nothing personally interesting in the men. But what we want to see any one *bodily* for, is when there is something peculiar, striking 5 in the individuals, more than we can learn from their writings, and yet are curious to know. I dare say Locke and Newton were very like Kneller's portraits of them. But who could paint Shakspeare?"—"Ay," retorted A——, "there it is; then I suppose you would prefer seeing him and Milton instead?" 10 —"No," said B——, "neither. I have seen so much of Shakspeare on the stage and on book-stalls, in frontispieces and on mantelpieces, that I am quite tired of the everlasting repetition: and as to Milton's face, the impressions that have come down to us of it I do not like; it is too starched and puritanical; 15 and I should be afraid of losing some of the manna of his poetry in the leaven of his countenance and the precisian's band and gown."—"I shall guess no more," said A——. "Who is it, then, you would like to see 'in his habit as he lived,' if you had your choice of the whole range of English literature?" B—— 20 then named Sir Thomas Brown and Fulke Greville, the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, as the two worthies whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the floor of his apartment in their night-gown and slippers, and to exchange friendly greeting with them. At this A—— laughed outright, and conceived 25 B—— was jesting with him; but as no one followed his example, he thought there might be something in it, and waited for an explanation in a state of whimsical suspense. B—— then (as well as I can remember a conversation that passed twenty years ago—how time slips!) went on as follows. "The reason why 30 I pitch upon these two authors is, that their writings are riddles, and they themselves the most mysterious of personages. They resemble the soothsayers of old, who dealt in dark hints and doubtful oracles; and I should like to ask them the meaning of

what no mortal but themselves, I should suppose, can fathom. There is Dr. Johnson: I have no curiosity, no strange uncertainty about him: he and Boswell together have pretty well let me into the secret of what passed through his mind. He and  
 5 other writers like him are sufficiently explicit: my friends, whose repose I should be tempted to disturb, (were it in my power) are implicit, inextricable, inscrutable.

" And call up him who left half-told  
 The story of Cambuscan bold."

10 "When I look at that obscure but gorgeous prose-composition (the *Urn-burial*) I seem to myself to look into a deep abyss, at the bottom of which are hid pearls and rich treasure; or it is like a stately labyrinth of doubt and withering speculation, and I would invoke the spirit of the author to lead me through it.  
 15 Besides, who would not be curious to see the lineaments of a man who, having himself been twice married, wished that mankind were propagated like trees! As to Fulke Greville, he is like nothing but one of his own 'Prologues spoken by the ghost of an old king of Ormus,' a truly formidable and inviting personage:  
 20 his style is apocalyptic, cabalistical, a knot worthy of such an apparition to untie; and for the unravelling a passage or two, I would stand the brunt of an encounter with so portentous a commentator!"—"I am afraid in that case," said A——, "that if the mystery were once cleared up, the merit  
 25 might be lost;"—and turning to me, whispered a friendly apprehension, that while B—— continued to admire these old crabbed authors, he would never become a popular writer. Dr. Donne was mentioned as a writer of the same period, with a very interesting countenance, whose history was singular, and  
 30 whose meaning was often quite as *uncomeatable*, without a personal citation from the dead, as that of any of his contemporaries. The volume was produced; and while some one was expatiating on the exquisite simplicity and beauty of the portrait prefixed to

the old edition, A—— got hold of the poetry, and exclaiming,  
 "What have we here?" read the following:—

"Here lies a She-Sun and a He-Moon there,  
 She gives the best light to his sphere  
 Or each is both and all, and so  
 They unto one another nothing owe." 5

There was no resisting this, till B——, seizing the volume,  
 turned to the beautiful "Lines to his Mistress," dissuading her  
 from accompanying him abroad, and read them with suffused  
 features and a faltering tongue. 10

"By our first strange and fatal interview,  
 By all desires which thereof did ensue,  
 By our long starving hopes, by that remorse  
 Which my words' masculine persuasive force  
 Begot in thee, and by the memory 15  
 Of hurts, which spies and rivals threaten'd me,  
 I calmly beg. But by thy father's wrath,  
 By all pains which want and divorcement hath,  
 I conjure thee; and all the oaths which I  
 And thou have sworn to seal joint constancy 20  
 Here I unswear, and overswear them thus,  
 Thou shalt not love by ways so dangerous.  
 Temper, oh fair Love! love's impetuous rage,  
 Be my true mistress still, not my feign'd Page;  
 I'll go, and, by thy kind leave, leave behind 25  
 Thee, only worthy to nurse it in my mind.  
 Thirst to come back; oh, if thou die before,  
 My soul from other lands to thee shall soar.  
 Thy (else Almighty) beauty cannot move  
 Rage from the seas, nor thy love teach them love, 30  
 Nor tame wild Boreas' harshness; thou hast read  
 How roughly he in pieces shiver'd  
 Fair Orithea, whom he swore he lov'd.  
 Fall ill or good, 'tis madness to have prov'd  
 Dangers unurg'd: Feed on this flattery, 35  
 That absent lovers one with th' other be.  
 Dissemble nothing, not a boy; nor change  
 Thy body's habit, nor mind; be not strange  
 To thyself only. All will spy in thy face

A blushing, womanly, discovering grace.  
 Richly cloth'd apes are call'd apes, and as soon  
 Eclips'd as bright we call the moon the moon.  
 Men of France, changeable cameleons,  
 5 Spittles of diseases, shops of fashions,  
 Love's fuellers, and the rightest company  
 Of players, which upon the world's stage be,  
 Will quickly know thee. . . . O stay here! for thee  
 England is only a worthy gallery,  
 10 To walk in expectation; till from thence  
 Our greatest King call thee to his presence.  
 When I am gone, dream me some happiness,  
 Nor let thy looks our long hid love confess,  
 Nor praise, nor dispraise me; nor bless, nor curse  
 15 Openly love's force, nor in bed fright thy nurse  
 With midnight's startings, crying out, Oh, oh,  
 Nurse, oh, my love is slain, I saw him go  
 O'er the white Alps alone; I saw him, I,  
 Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die.  
 20 Augur me better chance, except dread Jove  
 Think it enough for me to have had thy love."

Some one then inquired of B—— if we could not see from  
 the window the Temple-walk in which Chaucer used to take his  
 exercise; and on his name being put to the vote, I was pleased  
 25 to find that there was a general sensation in his favour in all  
 but A——, who said something about the ruggedness of the  
 metre, and even objected to the quaintness of the orthography.  
 I was vexed at this superficial gloss, pertinaciously reducing  
 every thing to its own trite level, and asked if he did not think  
 30 it would be worth while to scan the eye that had first greeted  
 the Muse in that dim twilight and early dawn of English litera-  
 ture; to see the head, round which the visions of fancy must  
 have played like gleams of inspiration or a sudden glory; to  
 watch those lips that "lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers  
 35 came" — as by a miracle, or as if the dumb should speak? Nor  
 was it alone that he had been the first to tune his native tongue  
 (however imperfectly to modern ears); but he was himself a  
 noble, manly character, standing before his age and striving

to advance it; a pleasant humourist withal, who has not only handed down to us the living manners of his time, but had, no doubt, store of curious and quaint devices, and would make as hearty a companion as Mine Host of the Tabard. His interview with Petrarch is fraught with interest. Yet I would rather have 5 seen Chaucer in company with the author of the Decameron, and have heard them exchange their best stories together, — the Squire's Tale against the story of the Falcon, the Wife of Bath's Prologue against the Adventures of Friar Albert. How fine to see the high mysterious brow which learning then wore, re- 10 lieved by the gay, familiar tone of men of the world, and by the courtesies of genius. Surely, the thoughts and feelings which passed through the minds of these great revivers of learning, these Cadmuses who sowed the teeth of letters, must have stamped an expression on their features, as different from the 15 moderns as their books, and well worth the perusal. "Dante," I continued, "is as interesting a person as his own Ugolino, one whose lineaments curiosity would as eagerly devour in order to penetrate his spirit, and the only one of the Italian poets I should care much to see. There is a fine portrait of Ariosto by no less 20 a hand than Titian's; light, Moorish, spirited, but not answering our idea. The same artist's large colossal profile of Peter Aretine is the only likeness of the kind that has the effect of conversing with 'the mighty dead,' and this is truly spectral, ghastly, necromantic." B—— put it to me if I should like to see Spenser 25 as well as Chaucer; and I answered without hesitation, "No; for that his beauties were ideal, visionary, not palpable or personal, and therefore connected with less curiosity about the man. His poetry was the essence of romance, a very halo round the bright orb of fancy; and the bringing in the individual might 30 dissolve the charm. No tones of voice could come up to the mellifluous cadence of his verse; no form but of a winged angel could vie with the airy shapes he has described. He was (to our apprehensions) rather a 'creature of the element, that

lived in the rainbow and played in the plighted clouds,' than an ordinary mortal. Or if he did appear, I should wish it to be as a mere vision, like one of his own pageants, and that he should pass by unquestioned like a dream or sound —

5 ' — *That* was Arion crown'd :  
So went he playing on the wat'ry plain ! ' "

Captain C. muttered something about Columbus, and M. C. hinted at the Wandering Jew ; but the last was set aside as spurious, and the first made over to the New World.

10 " I should like," said Miss D——, " to have seen Pope talking with Patty Blount ; and I *have* seen Goldsmith." Every one turned round to look at Miss D——, as if by so doing they too could get a sight of Goldsmith.

" Where," asked a harsh croaking voice, " was Dr. Johnson  
15 in the years 1745–6 ? He did not write any thing that we know of, nor is there any account of him in Boswell during those two years. Was he in Scotland with the Pretender ? He seems to have passed through the scenes in the Highlands in company with Boswell many years after ' with lack-lustre eye,'  
20 yet as if they were familiar to him, or associated in his mind with interests that he durst not explain. If so, it would be an additional reason for my liking him ; and I would give something to have seen him seated in the tent with the youthful Majesty of Britain, and penning the Proclamation to all true  
25 subjects and adherents of the legitimate Government."

" I thought," said A——, turning short round upon B——, " that you of the Lake School did not like Pope ? " — " Not like Pope ! My dear sir, you must be under a mistake — I can read him over and over for ever ! " — " Why certainly, the Essay on  
30 Man must be allowed to be a master-piece. " — " It may be so, but I seldom look into it. " — " Oh ! then it's his Satires you admire ? " — " No, not his Satires, but his friendly Epistles and his compliments. " — " Compliments ! I did not know he ever

made any." — "The finest," said B——, "that were ever paid by the wit of man. Each of them is worth an estate for life — nay, is an immortality. There is that superb one to Lord Cornbury :

'Despise low joys, low gains ;  
Disdain whatever Cornbury disdains ;  
Be virtuous, and be happy for your pains.'

"Was there ever more artful insinuation of idolatrous praise? And then that noble apotheosis of his friend Lord Mansfield (however little deserved), when, speaking of the House of 10 Lords, he adds —

'Conspicuous scene! another yet is nigh,  
(More silent far) where kings and poets lie ;  
Where Murray (long enough his Country's pride)  
Shall be no more than Tully or than Hyde!'

"And with what a fine turn of indignant flattery he addresses Lord Bolingbroke —

'Why rail they then, if but one wreath of mine,  
Oh! all-accomplish'd St. John, deck thy shrine?'

"Or turn," continued B——, with a slight hectic on his cheek 20 and his eye glistening, "to his list of early friends :

'But why then publish? Granville the polite,  
And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write ;  
Well-natured Garth inflamed with early praise,  
And Congreve loved and Swift endured my lays :  
The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,  
Ev'n mitred Rochester would nod the head ;  
And St. John's self (great Dryden's friend before)  
Received with open arms one poet more.  
Happy my studies, if by these approved!  
Happier their author, if by these beloved!  
From these the world will judge of men and books,  
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks.'

Here his voice totally failed him, and throwing down the book, he said, "Do you think I would not wish to have been friends 35 with such a man as this?"

"What say you to Dryden?" — "He rather made a show of himself, and courted popularity in that lowest temple of Fame, a coffee-house, so as in some measure to vulgarize one's idea of him. Pope, on the contrary, reached the very *beau idéal* of what a poet's life should be; and his fame while living seemed to be an emanation from that which was to circle his name after death. He was so far enviable (and one would feel proud to have witnessed the rare spectacle in him) that he was almost the only poet and man of genius who met with his reward on this side of the tomb, who realized in friends, fortune, the esteem of the world, the most sanguine hopes of a youthful ambition, and who found that sort of patronage from the great during his lifetime which they would be thought anxious to bestow upon him after his death. Read Gay's verses to him on his supposed return from Greece, after his translation of Homer was finished, and say if you would not gladly join the bright procession that welcomed him home, or see it once more land at Whitehall-stairs." — "Still," said Miss D——, "I would rather have seen him talking with Patty Blount, or riding by in a coronet-coach with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu!"

E——, who was deep in a game of piquet at the other end of the room, whispered to M. C. to ask if Junius would not be a fit person to invoke from the dead. "Yes," said B——, "provided he would agree to lay aside his mask."

25 We were now at a stand for a short time, when Fielding was mentioned as a candidate: only one, however, seconded the proposition. "Richardson?" — "By all means, but only to look at him through the glass-door of his back-shop, hard at work upon one of his novels (the most extraordinary contrast that ever was presented between an author and his works), but not to let him come behind his counter lest he should want you to turn customer, nor to go upstairs with him, lest he should offer to read the first manuscript of Sir Charles Grandison, which was originally written in eight and twenty volumes

octavo, or get out the letters of his female correspondents, to prove that Joseph Andrews was low."

There was but one statesman in the whole of English history that any one expressed the least desire to see — Oliver Cromwell, with his fine, frank, rough, pimply face, and wily policy ; — 5 and one enthusiast, John Bunyan, the immortal author of the Pilgrim's Progress. It seemed that if he came into the room, dreams would follow him, and that each person would nod under his golden cloud, "nigh-sphered in Heaven," a canopy as strange and stately as any in Homer. 10

Of all persons near our own time, Garrick's name was received with the greatest enthusiasm, who was proposed by J. F——. He presently superseded both Hogarth and Handel, who had been talked of, but then it was on condition that he should act in tragedy and comedy, in the play and the farce, 15 Lear and Wildair and Abel Drugger. What a *sight for sore eyes* that would be! Who would not part with a year's income at least, almost with a year of his natural life, to be present at it? Besides, as he could not act alone, and recitations are unsatisfactory things, what a troop he must bring with him — 20 the silver-tongued Barry, and Quin, and Shuter and Weston, and Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Pritchard, of whom I have heard my father speak as so great a favourite when he was young! This would indeed be a revival of the dead, the restoring of art; and so much the more desirable, as such is the lurking 25 scepticism mingled with our overstrained admiration of past excellence, that though we have the speeches of Burke, the portraits of Reynolds, the writings of Goldsmith, and the conversation of Johnson, to show what people could do at that period, and to confirm the universal testimony to the merits of 30 Garrick; yet, as it was before our time, we have our misgivings, as if he was probably after all little better than a Bartlemy-fair actor, dressed out to play Macbeth in a scarlet coat and laced cocked-hat. For one, I should like to have seen and

heard with my own eyes and ears. Certainly, by all accounts, if any one was ever moved by the true histrionic *æstus*, it was Garrick. When he followed the Ghost in Hamlet, he did not drop the sword, as most actors do behind the scenes, but kept  
5 the point raised the whole way round, so fully was he possessed with the idea, or so anxious not to lose sight of his part for a moment. Once at a splendid dinner-party at Lord ——'s, they suddenly missed Garrick, and could not imagine what was become of him, till they were drawn to the window by the con-  
10 vulsive screams and peals of laughter of a young negro boy, who was rolling on the ground in an ecstasy of delight to see Garrick mimicking a turkey-cock in the court-yard, with his coat-tail stuck out behind, and in a seeming flutter of feathered rage and pride. Of our party only two persons present had  
15 seen the British Roscius; and they seemed as willing as the rest to renew their acquaintance with their old favourite.

We were interrupted in the hey-day and mid-career of this fanciful speculation, by a grumbler in a corner, who declared it was a shame to make all this rout about a mere player and  
20 farce-writer, to the neglect and exclusion of the fine old dramatists, the contemporaries and rivals of Shakspeare. B—— said he had anticipated this objection when he had named the author of Mustapha and Alaham; and out of caprice insisted upon keeping him to represent the set, in preference to the wild hare-  
25 brained enthusiast, Kit Marlowe; to the sexton of St. Ann's, Webster, with his melancholy yew-trees and death's-heads; to Deckar, who was but a garrulous proser; to the voluminous Heywood; and even to Beaumont and Fletcher, whom we might offend by complimenting the wrong author on their  
30 joint productions. Lord Brook, on the contrary, stood quite by himself, or in Cowley's words, was "a vast species alone." Some one hinted at the circumstance of his being a lord, which rather startled B——, but he said a *ghost* would perhaps dispense with strict etiquette, on being regularly addressed by his

title. Ben Jonson divided our suffrages pretty equally. Some were afraid he would begin to traduce Shakspeare, who was not present to defend himself. "If he grows disagreeable," it was whispered aloud, "there is G—— can match him." At length, his romantic visit to Drummond of Hawthornden was 5 mentioned, and turned the scale in his favour.

B—— inquired if there was any one that was hanged that I would choose to mention? And I answered, Eugene Aram.<sup>1</sup> The name of the "Admirable Crichton" was suddenly started as a splendid example of *waste* talents, so different from the 10 generality of his countrymen. This choice was mightily approved by a North-Briton present, who declared himself descended from that prodigy of learning and accomplishment, and said he had family-plate in his possession as vouchers for the fact, with the initials A. C. — *Admirable Crichton!* H—— 15 laughed or rather roared as heartily at this as I should think he has done for many years.

The last-named Mitre-courtier<sup>2</sup> then wished to know whether there were any metaphysicians to whom one might be tempted to apply the wizard spell? I replied, there were only six in 20 modern times deserving the name — Hobbes, Berkeley, Butler, Hartley, Hume, Leibnitz; and perhaps Jonathan Edwards, a Massachusetts man.<sup>3</sup> As to the French, who talked fluently of having *created* this science, there was not a tittle in any of their writings, that was not to be found literally in the authors I had 25 mentioned. [Horne Tooke, who might have a claim to come in

<sup>1</sup> See Newgate Calendar for 1758.

<sup>2</sup> B—— at this time occupied chambers in Mitre court, Fleet street.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Bacon is not included in this list, nor do I know where he should come in. It is not easy to make room for him and his reputation together. This great and celebrated man in some of his works recommends it to pour a bottle of claret into the ground of a morning, and to stand over it, inhaling the perfumes. So he sometimes enriched the dry and barren soil of speculation with the fine aromatic spirit of his genius. His Essays and his Advancement of Learning are works of vast depth and scope of observation. The last, though it contains no positive discoveries, is a noble chart of the human intellect, and a guide to all future inquirers.

under the head of Grammar, was still living.] None of these names seemed to excite much interest, and I did not plead for the re-appearance of those who might be thought best fitted by the abstracted nature of their studies for the present spiritual and disembodied state, and who, even while on this living stage, were nearly divested of common flesh and blood. As A—— with an uneasy, fidgety face was about to put some question about Mr. Locke and Dugald Stewart, he was prevented by M. C. who observed, "If J—— was here, he would undoubtedly be for having up those profound and redoubted socialists, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus." I said this might be fair enough in him who had read or fancied he had read the original works, but I did not see how we could have any right to call up these authors to give an account of themselves in person till we had looked into their writings.

By this time it should seem that some rumour of our whimsical deliberation had got wind, and had disturbed the *irritable genus* in their shadowy abodes, for we received messages from several candidates that we had just been thinking of. Gray declined our invitation, though he had not yet been asked: Gay offered to come and bring in his hand the Duchess of Bolton, the original Polly: Steele and Addison left their cards as Captain Sentry and Sir Roger de Coverley: Swift came in and sat down without speaking a word, and quitted the room as abruptly: Otway and Chatterton were seen lingering on the opposite side of the Styx, but could not muster enough between them to pay Charon his fare: Thomson fell asleep in the boat, and was rowed back again — and Burns sent a low fellow, one John Barleycorn, an old companion of his who had conducted him to the other world, to say that he had during his lifetime been drawn out of his retirement as a show, only to be made an exciseman of, and that he would rather remain where he was. He desired, however, to shake hands by his representative — the hand, thus held out, was in a burning fever, and shook prodigiously.

The room was hung round with several portraits of eminent painters. While we were debating whether we should demand speech with these masters of mute eloquence, whose features were so familiar to us, it seemed that all at once they glided from their frames, and seated themselves at some little distance 5 from us. There was Leonardo with his majestic beard and watchful eye, having a bust of Archimedes before him; next him was Raphael's graceful head turned round to the Fornarina; and on his other side was Lucretia Borgia, with calm, golden locks; Michael Angelo had placed the model of 10 St. Peter's on the table before him; Corregio had an angel at his side; Titian was seated with his Mistress between himself and Giorgioni; Guido was accompanied by his own Aurora, who took a dice-box from him; Claude held a mirror in his hand; Rubens patted a beautiful panther (led in by a satyr) on 15 the head; Vandyke appeared as his own Paris, and Rembrandt was hid under furs, gold chains and jewels, which Sir Joshua eyed closely, holding his hand so as to shade his forehead. Not a word was spoken; and as we rose to do them homage, they still presented the same surface to the view. Not being 20 *bonâ-fide* representations of living people, we got rid of the splendid apparitions by signs and dumb show. As soon as they had melted into thin air, there was a loud noise at the outer door, and we found it was Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio, who had been raised from the dead by their earnest 25 desire to see their illustrious successors —

"Whose names on earth  
In Fame's eternal records live for aye!"

Finding them gone, they had no ambition to be seen after them, and mournfully withdrew. "Egad!" said B——, "those 30 are the very fellows I should like to have had some talk with, to know how they could see to paint when all was dark around them?"

"But shall we have nothing to say," interrogated G. J——, "to the Legend of Good Women?"—"Name, name, Mr. J——," cried H—— in a boisterous tone of friendly exultation, "name as many as you please, without reserve or fear of molestation!"

5 J—— was perplexed between so many amiable recollections, that the name of the lady of his choice expired in a pensive whiff of his pipe; and B—— impatiently declared for the Duchess of Newcastle. Mrs. Hutchinson was no sooner mentioned, than she carried the day from the Duchess. We were

10 the less solicitous on this subject of filling up the posthumous lists of Good Women, as there was already one in the room as good, as sensible, and in all respects as exemplary, as the best of them could be for their lives! "I should like vastly to have seen Ninon de l'Enclos," said that incomparable person; and

15 this immediately put us in mind that we had neglected to pay honour due to our friends on the other side of the Channel: Voltaire, the patriarch of levity, and Rousseau, the father of sentiment, Montaigne and Rabelais (great in wisdom and in wit), Molière and that illustrious group that are collected round him

20 (in the print of that subject) to hear him read his comedy of the Tartuffe at the house of Ninon; Racine, La Fontaine, Rochefoucault, St. Evremont, &c.

"There is one person," said a shrill, querulous voice, "I would rather see than all these — Don Quixote!"

25 "Come, come!" said H——; "I thought we should have no heroes, real or fabulous. What say you, Mr. B——? Are you for eking out your shadowy list with such names as Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Tamerlane, or Ghengis Khan?" "Excuse me," said B——, "on the subject of characters in active life,

30 plotters and disturbers of the world, I have a crotchet of my own, which I beg leave to reserve."—"No, no! come, out with your worthies!"—"What do you think of Guy Faux and Judas Iscariot?" H—— turned an eye upon him like a wild Indian, but cordial and full of smothered glee. "Your most

exquisite reason!" was echoed on all sides; and A—— thought that B—— had now fairly entangled himself. "Why, I cannot but think," retorted he of the wistful countenance, "that Guy Faux, that poor fluttering annual scare-crow of straw and rags, is an ill-used gentleman. I would give some- 5 thing to see him sitting pale and emaciated, surrounded by his matches and his barrels of gunpowder, and expecting the moment that was to transport him to Paradise for his heroic self-devotion; but if I say any more, there is that fellow G—— will make something of it. — And as to Judas Iscariot, 10 my reason is different. I would fain see the face of him, who, having dipped his hand in the same dish with the Son of Man, could afterwards betray him. I have no conception of such a thing; nor have I ever seen any picture (not even Leonardo's very fine one) that gave me the least idea of it." — "You have 15 said enough, Mr. B——, to justify your choice."

"Oh! ever right, Menenius,— ever right!"

"There is only one other person I can ever think of after this," continued H——; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. "If Shakspeare was to 20 come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment!"

As a lady present seemed now to get uneasy at the turn the conversation had taken, we rose up to go. The morning broke 25 with that dim, dubious light by which Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio must have seen to paint their earliest works; and we parted to meet again and renew similar topics at night, the next night, and the night after that, till that night overspread Europe which saw no dawn. The same event, in truth, broke 30 up our little Congress that broke up the great one. But that was to meet again: our deliberations have never been resumed.

## ON THE FEELING OF IMMORTALITY IN YOUTH

"Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us."

— SIR THOMAS BROWN.

No young man believes he shall ever die. It was a saying of my brother's, and a fine one. There is a feeling of Eternity in youth, which makes us amends for every thing. To be young is to be as one of the Immortal Gods. One half of time indeed  
5 is flown—the other half remains in store for us with all its countless treasures; for there is no line drawn, and we see no limit to our hopes and wishes. We make the coming age our own. —

"The vast, the unbounded prospect lies before us."

10 Death, old age, are words without a meaning, that pass by us like the idle air which we regard not. Others may have undergone, or may still be liable to them—we "bear a charmed life," which laughs to scorn all such sickly fancies. As in setting out on a delightful journey, we strain our eager gaze  
15 forward —

"Bidding the lovely scenes at distance hail," —

and see no end to the landscape, new objects presenting themselves as we advance; so, in the commencement of life, we set no bounds to our inclinations, nor to the unrestricted opportunities of gratifying them. We have as yet found no obstacle,  
20 no disposition to flag; and it seems that we can go on so for ever. We look round in a new world, full of life, and motion, and ceaseless progress; and feel in ourselves all the vigour and spirit to keep pace with it, and do not foresee from any present

symptoms how we shall be left behind in the natural course of things, decline into old age, and drop into the grave. It is the simplicity, and as it were *abstractedness* of our feelings in youth, that (so to speak) identifies us with nature, and (our experience being slight and our passions strong) deludes us into a belief 5 of being immortal like it. Our short-lived connection with existence, we fondly flatter ourselves, is an indissoluble and lasting union — a honey-moon that knows neither coldness, jar, nor separation. As infants smile and sleep, we are rocked in the cradle of our wayward fancies, and lulled into security by the 10 roar of the universe around us — we quaff the cup of life with eager haste without draining it, instead of which it only overflows the more — objects press around us, filling the mind with their magnitude and with the throng of desires that wait upon them, so that we have no room for the thoughts of death. 15 From the plenitude of our being, we cannot change all at once to dust and ashes, we cannot imagine “this sensible, warm motion, to become a kneaded clod” — we are too much dazzled by the brightness of the waking dream around us to look into the darkness of the tomb. We no more see our end than 20 our beginning: the one is lost in oblivion and vacancy, as the other is hid from us by the crowd and hurry of approaching events. Or the grim shadow is seen lingering in the horizon, which we are doomed never to overtake, or whose last, faint, glimmering outline touches upon Heaven and translates us to 25 the skies! Nor would the hold that life has taken of us permit us to detach our thoughts from the present objects and pursuits, even if we would. What is there more opposed to health, than sickness; to strength and beauty, than decay and dissolution; to the active search of knowledge than mere oblivion? 30 Or is there none of the usual advantage to bar the approach of Death, and mock his idle threats; Hope supplies their place, and draws a veil over the abrupt termination of all our cherished schemes. While the spirit of youth remains unimpaired,

ere the "wine of life is drank up," we are like people intoxicated or in a fever, who are hurried away by the violence of their own sensations: it is only as present objects begin to pall upon the sense, as we have been disappointed in our favourite  
 5 pursuits, cut off from our closest ties, that passion loosens its hold upon the breast, that we by degrees become weaned from the world, and allow ourselves to contemplate, "as in a glass, darkly," the possibility of parting with it for good. The example of others, the voice of experience, has no effect upon us what-  
 10 ever. Casualties we must avoid: the slow and deliberate advances of age we can play at *hide-and-seek* with. We think ourselves too lusty and too nimble for that blear-eyed decrepid old gentleman to catch us. Like the foolish fat scullion, in Sterne, when she hears that Master Bobby is dead, our only  
 15 reflection is — "So am not I!" The idea of death, instead of staggering our confidence, rather seems to strengthen and enhance our possession and our enjoyment of life. Others may fall around like leaves, or be mowed down like flowers by the scythe of Time: these are but tropes and figures to the unre-  
 20 flecting ears and overweening presumption of youth. It is not till we see the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy, withering around us, and our own pleasures cut up by the roots, that we bring the moral home to ourselves, that we abate something of the wanton extravagance of our pretensions, or that the  
 25 emptiness and dreariness of the prospect before us reconciles us to the stillness of the grave!

"Life! thou strange thing, thou hast a power to feel  
 Thou art, and to perceive that others are."<sup>1</sup>

Well might the poet begin his indignant invective against an  
 30 art, whose professed object is its destruction, with this animated apostrophe to life. Life is indeed a strange gift, and its privileges are most miraculous. Nor is it singular that when the splendid boon is first granted us, our gratitude, our admiration,

<sup>1</sup> Fawcett's *Art of War*, a poem, 1794.

and our delight should prevent us from reflecting on our own nothingness, or from thinking it will ever be recalled. Our first and strongest impressions are taken from the mighty scene that is opened to us, and we very innocently transfer its durability as well as magnificence to ourselves. So newly found, we cannot make up our minds to parting with it yet and at least put off that consideration to an indefinite term. Like a clown at a fair, we are full of amazement and rapture, and have no thoughts of going home, or that it will soon be night. We know our existence only from external objects, and we measure it by them. We can never be satisfied with gazing; and nature will still want us to look on and applaud. Otherwise, the sumptuous entertainment, "the feast of reason and the flow of soul," to which they were invited, seems little better than mockery and a cruel insult. We do not go from a play till the scene is ended, and the lights are ready to be extinguished. But the fair face of things still shines on; shall we be called away, before the curtain falls, or ere we have scarce had a glimpse of what is going on? Like children, our step-mother Nature holds us up to see the raree-show of the universe; and then, as if life were a burthen to support, lets us instantly down again. Yet in that short interval, what "brave sublunary things" does not the spectacle unfold; like a bubble, at one minute reflecting the universe, and the next, shook to air!—To see the golden sun and the azure sky, the outstretched ocean, to walk upon the green earth, and to be lord of a thousand creatures, to look down the giddy precipices or over the distant flowery vales, to see the world spread out under one's finger in a map, to bring the stars near, to view the smallest insects in a microscope, to read history, and witness the revolutions of empires and the succession of generations, to hear of the glory of Sidon and Tyre, of Babylon and Susa, as of a faded pageant, and to say all these were, and are now nothing, to think that we exist in such a point of time, and in such a corner of space, to be at

once spectators and a part of the moving scene, to watch the return of the seasons, of spring and autumn, to hear

“——The stockdove plain amid the forest deep,  
That drowsy rustles to the sighing gale”——

5 to traverse desert wilderness, to listen to the midnight choir, to visit lighted halls, or plunge into the dungeon's gloom, or sit in crowded theatres and see life itself mocked, to feel heat and cold, pleasure and pain, right and wrong, truth and falsehood, to study the works of art and refine the sense of beauty to agony, to  
10 worship fame and to dream of immortality, to have read Shakespeare and belong to the same species as Sir Isaac Newton;<sup>1</sup> to

<sup>1</sup> Lady Wortley Montague says, in one of her letters, that “she would much rather be a rich *effendi*, with all his ignorance, than Sir Isaac Newton, with all his knowledge.” This was not perhaps an impolitic choice, as she had a better chance of becoming one than the other, there being many rich *effendis* to one Sir Isaac Newton. The wish was not a very intellectual one. The same petulance of rank and sex breaks out every where in these “*Letters*.” She is constantly reducing the poets or philosophers who have the misfortune of her acquaintance, to the figure they might make at her Ladyship's levee or toilette, not considering that the public mind does not sympathize with this process of a fastidious imagination. In the same spirit, she declares of Pope and Swift, that “had it not been for the *good-nature* of mankind, these two superior beings were entitled, by their birth and hereditary fortune, to be only a couple of link-boys.” Gulliver's Travels, and the Rape of the Lock, go for nothing in this critical estimate, and the world raised the authors to the rank of superior beings, in spite of their disadvantages of birth and fortune, *out of pure good-nature!* So again, she says of Richardson, that he had never got beyond the servant's hall, and was utterly unfit to describe the manners of people of quality; till in the capricious workings of her vanity, she persuades herself that Clarissa is very like what she was at her age, and that Sir Thomas and Lady Grandison strongly resembled what she had heard of her mother and remembered of her father. It is one of the beauties and advantages of literature, that it is the means of abstracting the mind from the narrowness of local and personal prejudices, and of enabling us to judge of truth and excellence by their inherent merits alone. Woe be to the pen that would undo this fine illusion (the only reality), and teach us to regulate our notions of genius and virtue by the circumstances in which they happen to be placed! You would not expect a person whom you saw in a servant's hall, or behind a counter, to write Clarissa; but after he had written the work, to *pre-judge* it from the situation of the writer, is an unpardonable piece of injustice and folly. His merit could only be the greater from the contrast. If literature is an elegant accomplishment, which none but persons of birth and fashion should be allowed to excel in, or to exercise with advantage to the public, let them by all means take upon them the task of enlightening and

be and to do all this, and then in a moment to be nothing, to have it all snatched from one like a juggler's ball or a phantasmagoria ;

refining mankind : if they decline this responsibility as too heavy for their shoulders, let those who do the drudgery in their stead, however inadequately, for want of their polite example, receive the meed that is their due, and not be treated as low pretenders who have encroached upon the provinces of their betters. Suppose Richardson to have been acquainted with the great man's steward, or valet, instead of the great man himself, I will venture to say that there was more difference between him who lived in an *ideal world*, and had the genius and felicity to open that world to others, and his friend the steward, than between the lacquey and the mere lord, or between those who lived in different rooms of the same house, who dined on the same luxuries at different tables, who rode outside or inside of the same coach, and were proud of wearing or of bestowing the same tawdry livery. If the lord is distinguished from his valet by any thing else, it is by education and talent, which he has in common with the author. But if the latter shews these in the highest degree, it is asked what are his pretensions ? Not birth or fortune, for neither of these would enable him to write *Clarissa*. One man is born with a title and estate, another with genius. That is sufficient ; and we have no right to question the genius for want of the *gentility*, unless the former ran in families, or could be bequeathed with a fortune, which is not the case. Were it so, the flowers of literature, like jewels and embroidery, would be confined to the fashionable circles ; and there would be no pretenders to taste or elegance but those whose names were found in the court list. No one objects to Claude's Landscapes as the work of a pastry-cook, or withholds from Raphael the epithet of *divine*, because his parents were not rich. This impertinence is confined to men of letters ; the evidence of the senses baffles the envy and foppery of mankind. No quarter ought to be given to this *aristocratic* tone of criticism whenever it appears. People of quality are not contented with carrying all the external advantages for their own share, but would persuade you that all the intellectual ones are packed up in the same bundle. Lord Byron was a later instance of this double and unwarrantable style of pretension — *monstrum ingens, bifforme*. He could not endure a lord who was not a wit, nor a poet who was not a lord. Nobody but himself answered to his own standard of perfection. Mr. Moore carries a proxy in his pocket from some noble persons to estimate literary merit by the same rule. Lady Mary calls Fielding names, but she afterwards makes atonement by doing justice to his frank, free, hearty nature, where he says "his spirits gave him raptures with his cook-maid, and cheerfulness when he was starving in a garret, and his happy constitution made him forget every thing when he was placed before a venison-pasty or over a flask of champagne." She does not want shrewdness and spirit when her petulance and conceit do not get the better of her, and she has done ample and merited execution on Lord Bolingbroke. She is, however, very angry at the freedoms taken with the Great ; *smells a rat* in this indiscriminate scribbling, and the familiarity of writers with the reading public ; and inspired by her Turkish costume, foretells a French and English revolution as the consequence of transferring the patronage of letters from the *quality* to the mob, and of supposing that ordinary writers or readers can have any notions in common with their superiors.

there is something revolting and incredible to sense in the transition, and no wonder that, aided by youth and warm blood, and the flush of enthusiasm, the mind contrives for a long time to reject it with disdain and loathing as a monstrous and  
5 improbable fiction, like a monkey on a house-top, that is loath, amidst its fine discoveries and specious antics, to be tumbled headlong into the street, and crushed to atoms, the sport and laughter of the multitude!

The change, from the commencement to the close of life,  
10 appears like a fable, after it had taken place; how should we treat it otherwise than as a chimera before it has come to pass? There are some things that happened so long ago, places or persons we have formerly seen, of which such dim traces remain, we hardly know whether it was sleeping or waking they  
15 occurred; they are like dreams within the dream of life, a mist, a film before the eye of memory, which, as we try to recall them more distinctly, elude our notice altogether. It is but natural that the lone interval that we thus look back upon, should have appeared long and endless in prospect. There are others so  
20 distinct and fresh, they seem but of yesterday—their very vividness might be deemed a pledge of their permanence. Then, however far back our impressions may go, we find others still older (for our years are multiplied in youth); descriptions of scenes that we had read, and people before our time, Priam and  
25 the Trojan war; and even then, Nestor was old and dwelt delighted on his youth, and spoke of the race, of heroes that were no more;—what wonder that, seeing this long line of being pictured in our minds, and reviving as it were in us, we should give ourselves involuntary credit for an indeterminate  
30 existence? In the Cathedral at Peterborough there is a monument to Mary, Queen of Scots, at which I used to gaze when a boy, while the events of the period, all that had happened since, passed in review before me. If all this mass of feeling and imagination could be crowded into a moment's compass,

what might not the whole of life be supposed to contain? We are heirs of the past; we count on the future as our natural reversion. Besides, there are some of our early impressions so exquisitely tempered, it appears that they must always last — nothing can add to take away from their sweetness and purity 5 — the first breath of spring, the hyacinth dipped in the dew, the mild lustre of the evening-star, the rainbow after a storm — while we have the full enjoyment of these, we must be young; and what can ever alter us in this respect? Truth, friendship, love, books, are also proof against the canker of 10 time; and while we live, but for them, we can never grow old. We take out a new lease of existence from the objects on which we set our affections, and become abstracted, impassive, immortal in them. We cannot conceive how certain sentiments should ever decay or grow cold in our breasts; and, consequently, to 15 maintain them in their first youthful glow and vigour, the flame of life must continue to burn as bright as ever, or rather, they are the fuel that feed the sacred lamp, that kindle "the purple light of love," and spread a golden cloud around our heads! Again, we not only flourish and survive in our affections (in 20 which we will not listen to the possibility of a change, any more than we foresee the wrinkles on the brow of a mistress), but we have a farther guarantee against the thoughts of death in our favourite studies and pursuits and in their continual advance. Art we know is long; life, we feel, should be so too. We see 25 no end of the difficulties we have to encounter: perfection is slow of attainment, and we must have time to accomplish it in. Rubens complained that when he had just learned his art, he was snatched away from it: we trust we shall be more fortunate! A wrinkle in an old head takes whole days to finish it 30 properly: but to catch "the Raphael grace, the Guido air," no limit should be put to our endeavours. What a prospect for the future! What a task we have entered upon! and shall we be arrested in the middle of it? We do not reckon our time

- thus employed lost, or our pains thrown away, or our progress slow — we do not droop or grow tired, but “gain a new vigour at our endless task ;” — and shall Time grudge us the opportunity to finish what we have auspiciously begun, and have  
 5 formed a sort of compact with nature to achieve ? The fame of the great names we look up to is also imperishable ; and shall not we, who contemplate it with such intense yearnings, imbibe a portion of ethereal fire, the *divinæ particula auræ*, which nothing can extinguish ? I remember to have looked at a print  
 10 of Rembrandt for hours together, without being conscious of the flight of time, trying to resolve it into its component parts, to connect its strong and sharp gradations, to learn the secret of its reflected lights, and found neither satiety nor pause in the prosecution of my studies. The print over which I was poring  
 15 would last long enough ; why should the idea in my mind, which was finer, more impalpable, perish before it ? At this, I redoubled the ardour of my pursuit, and by the very subtlety and refinement of my inquiries, seemed to bespeak for them an exemption from corruption and the rude grasp of Death.<sup>1</sup>
- 20 Objects, on our first acquaintance with them, have that singleness and integrity of impression that it seems as if nothing could destroy or obliterate them, so firmly are they stamped and rivetted on the brain. We repose on them with a sort of voluptuous indolence, in full faith and boundless confidence. We are ab-  
 25 sorbed in the present moment, or return to the same point — idling away a great deal of time in youth, thinking we have enough to spare. There is often a local feeling in the air, which is as fixed as if it were marble ; we loiter in dim cloisters, losing ourselves in thought and in their glimmering arches ; a wind-  
 30 ing road before us seems as long as the journey of life, and as full of events. Time and experience dissipate this illusion ; and by reducing them to detail, circumscribe the limits of our

<sup>1</sup> Is it not this that frequently keeps artists alive so long, *viz.* the constant occupation of their minds with vivid images, with little of the *wear-and-tear* of the body ?

expectations. It is only as the pageant of life passes by and the masques turn their backs upon us, that we see through the deception, or believe that the train will have an end. In many cases, the slow progress and monotonous texture of our lives, before we mingle with the world and are embroiled in its affairs, 5 has a tendency to aid the same feeling. We have a difficulty, when left to ourselves, and without the resource of books or some more lively pursuit, to "beguile the slow and creeping hours of time," and argue that if it moves on always at this tedious snail's-pace, it can never come to an end. We are will- 10 ing to skip over certain portions of it that separate us from favourite objects, that irritate ourselves at the unnecessary delay. The young are prodigal of life from a superabundance of it; the old are tenacious on the same score, because they have little left, and cannot enjoy even what remains of it. 15

For my part, I set out in life with the French Revolution, and that event had considerable influence on my early feelings, as on those of others. Youth was then doubly such. It was the dawn of a new era, a new impulse had been given to men's minds, and the sun of Liberty rose upon the sun of Life in the 20 same day, and both were proud to run their race together. Little did I dream, while my first hopes and wishes went hand in hand with those of the human race, that long before my eyes should close, that dawn would be overcast, and set once more in the night of despotism — "total eclipse!" Happy that I did 25 not. I felt for years, and during the best part of my existence, *heart-whole* in that cause, and triumphed in the triumphs over the enemies of man! At that time, while the fairest aspirations of the human mind seemed about to be realized, ere the image of man was defaced and his breast mangled in scorn, philosophy 30 took a higher, poetry could afford a deeper range. At that time, to read the Robbers, was indeed delicious, and to hear

"From the dungeon of the tower time-rent,  
That fearful voice, a famish'd father's cry,"

could be borne only amidst the fulness of hope, the crash of the fall of the strong holds of power, and the exulting sounds of the march of human freedom. What feelings the death-scene in Don Carlos sent into the soul! In that headlong career of lofty enthusiasm, and the joyous opening of the prospects of the world and our own, the thought of death crossing it, smote doubly cold upon the mind; there was a stifling sense of oppression and confinement, an impatience of our present knowledge, a desire to grasp the whole of our existence in one strong embrace, to sound the mystery of life and death, and in order to put an end to the agony of doubt and dread, to burst through our prison-house, and confront the King of Terrors in his grisly palace! . . . As I was writing out this passage, my miniature-picture when a child lay on the mantle-piece, and I took it out of the case to look at it. I could perceive few traces of myself in it; but there was the same placid brow, the dimpled mouth, the same timid, inquisitive glance as ever. But its careless smile did not seem to reproach me with having become recreant to the sentiments that were then sown in my mind, or with having written a sentence that could call up a blush in this image of ingenuous youth!

"That time is past with all its giddy raptures." Since the future was barred to my progress, I have turned for consolation to the past, gathering up the fragments of my early recollections, and putting them into form that might live. It is thus, that when we find our personal and substantial identity vanishing from us, we strive to gain a reflected and substituted one in our thoughts: we do not like to perish wholly, and wish to bequeath our names at least to posterity. As long as we can keep alive our cherished thoughts and nearest interests in the minds of others, we do not appear to have retired altogether from the stage, we still occupy a place in the estimation of mankind, exercise a powerful influence over them, and it is only our bodies that are trampled into dust or dispersed to air. Our darling speculations

still find favour and encouragement, and we make as good a figure in the eyes of our descendants, nay, perhaps, a better than we did in our life-time. This is one point gained; the demands of our self-love are so far satisfied. Besides, if by the proofs of intellectual superiority we survive ourselves in 5 this world, by exemplary virtue or unblemished faith, we are taught to ensure an interest in another and a higher state of being, and to anticipate at the same time the applauses of men and angels.

"Even from the tomb the voice of nature cries;  
Even in our ashes live their wonted fires." 10

As we advance in life, we acquire a keener sense of the value of time. Nothing else, indeed, seems of any consequence; and we become misers in this respect. We try to arrest its few last tottering steps, and to make it linger on the brink of the grave. 15 We can never leave off wondering how that which has ever been should cease to be, and would still live on, that we may wonder at our own shadow, and when "all the life of life is flown," dwell on the retrospect of the past. This is accompanied by a mechanical tenaciousness of whatever we possess, by a distrust 20 and a sense of fallacious hollowness in all we see. Instead of the full, pulpy feeling of youth, every thing is flat and insipid. The world is a painted witch, that puts us off with false shews and tempting appearances. The ease, the jocund gaiety, the unsuspecting security of youth are fled: nor can we, without 25 flying in the face of common sense,

"From the last dregs of life, hope to receive  
What its first sprightly runnings could not give."

If we can slip out of the world without notice or mischance, can tamper with bodily infirmity, and frame our minds to the 30 becoming composure of *still-life*, before we sink into total insensibility, it is as much as we ought to expect. We do not in the regular course of nature die all at once: we have mouldered

away gradually long before; faculty after faculty, attachment after attachment, we are torn from ourselves piece-meal while living; year after year takes something from us; and death only consigns the last remnant of what we were to the grave.

- 5 The revulsion is not so great, and a quiet *euthanasia* is a winding-up of the plot, that is not out of reason or nature.

That we should thus in a manner outlive ourselves, and dwindle imperceptibly into nothing, is not surprising, when even in our prime the strongest impressions leave so little traces of  
10 themselves behind, and the last object is driven out by the succeeding one. How little effect is produced on us at any time by the books we have read, the scenes we have witnessed, the sufferings we have gone through! Think only of the variety of feelings we experience in reading an interesting romance, or  
15 being present at a fine play — what beauty, what sublimity, what soothing, what heart-rending emotions! You would suppose these would last for ever, or at least subdue the mind to a correspondent tone and harmony — while we turn over the page, while the scene is passing before us, it seems as if nothing  
20 could ever after shake our resolution, that "treason domestic, foreign levy, nothing could touch us farther!" The first splash of mud we get, on entering the street, the first pettifogging shop-keeper that cheats us out of two-pence, and the whole vanishes clean out of our remembrance, and we become the idle prey  
25 of the most petty and annoying circumstances. The mind soars by an effort to the grand and lofty: it is at home, in the grovelling, the disagreeable, and the little. This happens in the height and hey-day of our existence, when novelty gives a stronger impulse to the blood and takes a faster hold of the brain, (I have  
30 known the impression on coming out of a gallery of pictures then last half a day) — as we grow old, we become more feeble and querulous, every object "reverbs its own hollowness," and both worlds are not enough to satisfy the peevish importunity and extravagant presumption of our desires! There are a few

superior, happy beings, who are born with a temper exempt from every trifling annoyance. This spirit sits serene and smiling as in its native skies, and a divine harmony (whether heard or not) plays around them. This is to be at peace. Without this, it is in vain to fly into deserts, or to build a hermitage on the 5 top of rocks, if regret and ill-humour follow us there : and with this, it is needless to make the experiment. The only true retirement is that of the heart ; the only true leisure is the repose of the passions. To such persons it makes little difference whether they are young or old ; and they die as they have 10 lived, with graceful resignation.

## ON READING NEW BOOKS

"And what of this new book, that the whole world make such a rout about?" — STERNE.

I cannot understand the rage manifested by the greater part of the world for reading New Books. If the public had read all those that have gone before, I can conceive how they should not wish to read the same work twice over; but when I consider the countless volumes that lie unopened, unregarded, unread, and unthought-of, I cannot enter into the pathetic complaints that I hear made, that Sir Walter writes no more — that the press is idle — that Lord Byron is dead. If I have not read a book before, it is, to all intents and purposes, new to me, whether it was printed yesterday or three hundred years ago. If it be urged that it has no modern, passing incidents, and is out of date and old-fashioned, then it is so much the newer: it is farther removed from other works that I have lately read, from the familiar routine of ordinary life, and makes so much more addition to my knowledge. But many people would as soon think of putting on old armour, as of taking up a book not published within the last month, or year at the utmost. There is a fashion in reading as well as in dress, which lasts only for the season. One would imagine that books were, like women, the worse for being old;<sup>1</sup> that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time; that they open their leaves more cordially; that the spirit of enjoyment wears out with the spirit of novelty; and that, after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf. This conceit seems to be followed up in

<sup>1</sup> "Laws are not like women, the worse for being old." — *The Duke of Buckingham's Speech in the House of Lords, in Charles the Second's time.*

practice. What is it to me that another — that hundreds or thousands have in all ages read a work? Is it on this account the less likely to give me pleasure, because it has delighted so many others? Or can I taste this pleasure by proxy? Or am I in any degree the wiser for their knowledge? Yet this might 5 appear to be the inference. *Their* having read the work may be said to act upon us by sympathy, and the knowledge which so many other persons have of its contents deadens our curiosity and interest altogether. We set aside the subject as one on which others have made up their minds for us (as if we really 10 could have ideas in their heads), and are quite on the alert for the next new work, teeming hot from the press, which we shall be the first to read, criticise, and pass an opinion on. Oh, delightful! To cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrance of the scarcely dry paper, to examine the type, to see who is the 15 printer (which is some clue to the value that is set upon the work), to launch out into regions of thought and invention never trod till now, and to explore characters that never met a human eye before — this is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party, or a few hours of a spare morning to. Who, indeed, 20 when the work is critical and full of expectation, would venture to dine out, or to face a coterie of blue stockings in the evening, without having gone through this ordeal, or at least without hastily turning over a few of the first pages, while dressing, to be able to say that the beginning does not promise much, or 25 to tell the name of the heroine?

A new work is something in our power: we mount the bench, and sit in judgment on it; we can damn or recommend it to others at pleasure, can decry or extol it to the skies, and can give an answer to those who have not yet read it and expect an 30 account of it; and thus shew our shrewdness and the independence of our taste before the world have had time to form an opinion. If we cannot write ourselves, we become, by busying ourselves about it, a kind of *accessaries after the fact*.

Though not the parent of the bantling that "has just come into this breathing world, scarce half made up," without the aid of criticism and puffing, yet we are the gossips and foster-nurses on the occasion, with all the mysterious significance and self-importance of the tribe. If we wait, we must take our report from others; if we make haste, we may dictate our's to them. It is not a race, then, for priority of information, but for precedence in tattling and dogmatising. The work last out is the first that people talk and inquire about. It is the subject on the *tapis*—the cause that is pending. It is the last candidate for success (other claims have been disposed of), and appeals for this success to us, and us alone. Our predecessors can have nothing to say to this question, however they may have anticipated us on others; future ages, in all probability, will not trouble their heads about it; we are the panel. How hard, then, not to avail ourselves of our immediate privilege to give sentence of life or death—to seem in ignorance of what every one else is full of—to be behind-hand with the polite, the knowing, and fashionable part of mankind—to be at a loss and dumb-founded, when all around us are in their glory, and figuring away, on no other ground than that of having read a work that we have not! Books that are to be written hereafter cannot be criticised by us; those that were written formerly have been criticised long ago: but a new book is the property, the prey of ephemeral criticism, which it darts triumphantly upon; there is a raw thin air of ignorance and uncertainty about it, not filled up by any recorded opinion; and curiosity, impertinence, and vanity rush eagerly into the vacuum. A new book is the fair field for petulance and coxcombry to gather laurels in—the but set up for removing opinion to aim at. Can we wonder, then, that the circulating libraries are besieged by literary dowagers and their granddaughters, when a new novel is announced? That Mail-Coach copies of the *Edinburgh Review* are or were coveted? That

the Manuscript of the Waverley romances is sent abroad in time for the French, German, or even Italian translation to appear on the same day as the original work, so that the longing Continental public may not be kept waiting an instant longer than their fellow-readers in the English metropolis, 5 which would be as tantalising and insupportable as a little girl being kept without her new frock, when her sister's is just come home and is the talk and admiration of every one in the house? To be sure, there is something in the taste of the times; a modern work is expressly adapted to modern readers. It 10 appeals to our direct experience, and to well-known subjects; it is part and parcel of the world around us, and is drawn from the same sources as our daily thoughts. There is, therefore, so far, a natural or habitual sympathy between us and the literature of the day, though this is a different consideration 15 from the mere circumstance of novelty. An author now alive has a right to calculate upon the living public: he cannot count upon the dead, nor look forward with much confidence to those that are unborn. Neither, however, is it true that we are eager to read all new books alike: we turn from them with a certain 20 feeling of distaste and distrust, unless they are recommended to us by some peculiar feature or obvious distinction. Only young ladies from the boarding-school, or milliners' girls, read all the new novels that come out. It must be spoken of or against; the writer's name must be well known or a great 25 secret; it must be a topic of discourse and a mark for criticism—that is, it must be likely to bring us into notice in some way—or we take no notice of it. There is a mutual and tacit understanding on this head. We can no more read all the new books that appear, than we can read all the old ones that have 30 disappeared from time to time. A question may be started here, and pursued as far as needful, whether, if an old and worm-eaten Manuscript were discovered at the present moment, it would be sought after with the same avidity as a new and

hot-pressed poem, or other popular work? Not generally, certainly, though by a few with perhaps greater zeal. For it would not affect present interests, or amuse present fancies, or touch on present manners, or fall in with the public *egotism* in any way: it would be the work either of some obscure author—  
in which case it would want the principle of excitement; or of some illustrious name, whose style and manner would be already familiar to those most versed in the subject, and his fame established—so that, as a matter of comment and controversy, it would only go to account on the old score: there would be no room for learned feuds and heart-burnings. Was there not a Manuscript of Cicero's talked of as having been discovered about a year ago? But we have heard no more of it. There have been several other cases, more or less in point, in our time or near it. A Noble Lord (which may serve to shew at least the interest taken in books *not for being new*) some time ago gave £2000 for a copy of the first edition of the Decameron: but did he read it? It has been a fashion also of late for noble and wealthy persons to go to a considerable expense in ordering reprints of the old Chronicles and black-letter works. Does not this rather prove that the books did not circulate very rapidly or extensively, or such extraordinary patronage and liberality would not have been necessary? Mr. Thomas Taylor, at the instance, I believe, of the old Duke of Norfolk, printed fifty copies in quarto of a translation of the works of Plato and Aristotle. He did not choose that a larger impression should be struck off, lest these authors should get into the hands of the vulgar. There was no danger of a run in that way. I tried to read some of the Dialogues in the translation of Plato, but, I confess, could make nothing of it: "the logic was so different from ours!"<sup>1</sup> A

<sup>1</sup> An expression borrowed from a voluble German scholar, who gave this as an excuse for not translating the *Critique of Pure Reason* into English. He might as well have said seriously, that the *Rule of Three* in German was different from

startling experiment was made on this sort of retrospective curiosity, in the case of Ireland's celebrated Shakspeare forgery. The public there certainly manifested no backwardness nor lukewarmness: the enthusiasm was equal to the folly. But then the spirit exhibited on this occasion was partly 5 critical and polemical, and it is a problem whether an actual and undoubted play of Shakspeare's would have excited the same ferment; and, on the other hand, Shakspeare is an essential modern. People read and go to see his real plays, as well as his pretended ones. The *fuss* made about Ossian 10 is another test to refer to. It was its being the supposed revival of an old work (known only by scattered fragments or lingering tradition) which gave it its chief interest, though there was also a good deal of mystery and quackery concerned

our's. Mr. Taylor (the Platonist, as he was called) was a singular instance of a person in our time believing in the heathen mythology. He had a very beautiful wife. An impudent Frenchman, who came over to London, and lodged in the same house, made love to her, by pretending to worship her as Venus, and so thought to turn the tables on our philosopher. I once spent an evening with this gentleman at Mr. G. D.'s chambers, in Cliffords-inn, (where there was no exclusion of persons or opinions), and where we had pipes and tobacco, porter, and bread and cheese for supper. Mr. Taylor never smoked, never drank porter, and had an aversion to cheese. I remember he shewed with some triumph two of his fingers, which had been bent so that he had lost the use of them, in copying out the manuscripts of Proclus and Plotinus in a fine Greek hand. Such are the trophies of human pride! It would be well if our deep studies often produced no other crookedness and deformity! I endeavoured (but in vain) to learn something from the heathen philosopher as to Plato's doctrine of abstract ideas being the foundation of particular ones, which I suspect has more truth in it than we moderns are willing to admit. Another friend of mine once breakfasted with Mr. D. (the most amiable and absent of hosts), when there was no butter, no knife to cut the loaf with, and the tea-pot was without a spout. My friend, after a few immaterial ceremonies, adjourned to Peel's coffee-house, close by, where he regaled himself on buttered toast, coffee, and the newspaper of the day (a newspaper possessed some interest when we were young); and the only interruption to his satisfaction was the fear that his host might suddenly enter, and be shocked at his imperfect hospitality. He would probably forget the circumstance altogether. I am afraid that this veteran of the old school has not received many proofs of the *archaism* of the prevailing taste; and that the corrections in his History of the University of Cambridge have cost him more than the public will ever repay him for.

along with the din and stir of national jealousy and pretension. Who reads Ossian now? It is one of the reproaches brought against Buonaparte that he was fond of it when young. I cannot for myself see the objection. There is no doubt an antiquarian spirit always at work, and opposed to the spirit of novelty-hunting; but, though opposed, it is scarcely a match for it in a general and popular point of view. It is not long ago that I happened to be suggesting a new translation of Don Quixote to an enterprising bookseller; and his answer was, — "We want new Don Quixotes." I believe I deprived the same active-minded person of a night's rest, by telling him there was the beginning of another novel by Goldsmith in existence. This, if it could be procured, would satisfy both tastes for the new and the old at once. I fear it is but a fragment, and that we must wait till a new Goldsmith appears. We may observe of late a strong craving after *Memoirs* and *Lives of the Dead*. But these, it may be remarked, savour so much of the real and familiar, that the persons described differ from us only in being dead, which is a reflection to our advantage: or, if remote and romantic in their interest and adventures, they require to be bolstered up in some measure by the embellishments of modern style and criticism. The accounts of Petrarch and Laura, of Abelard and Eloise, have a lusciousness and warmth in the subject which contrast quaintly and pointedly with the coldness of the grave; and, after all, we prefer Pope's Eloise and Abelard with the modern dress and flourishes, to the sublime and affecting simplicity of the original Letters.

In some very just and agreeable reflections on the story of Abelard and Eloise, in a late number of a contemporary publication, there is a quotation of some lines from Lucan, which Eloise is said to have repeated in broken accents as she was advancing to the altar to receive the veil:

"O maxime conjux!

O thalamis indigne meis! Hoc juris habebat

In tantum fortuna caput? Cur impia nupsi,  
 Si miserum factura fui? Nunc accipe pœnas,  
 Séd quas sponte luam." — PHARSALIA, lib. 8.

This speech, quoted by another person, on such an occasion, might seem cold and pedantic; but from the mouth of the passionate and unaffected Eloise it cannot bear that interpretation. What sounding lines! What a pomp, and yet what a familiar boldness in their application — "proud as when blue Iris bends!" The reading this account brought forcibly to mind what has struck me often before — the unreasonableness of the complaint 10 we constantly hear of the ignorance and barbarism of former ages, and the folly of restricting all refinement and literary elegance to our own. We are, indeed, indebted to the ages that have gone before us, and could not well do without them. But in all ages there will be found still others that have gone before 15 with nearly equal lustre and advantage, though by distance and the intervention of multiplied excellence, this lustre may be dimmed or forgotten. Had it then no existence? We might, with the same reason, suppose that the horizon is the last boundary and verge of the round earth. Still, as we advance, it 20 recedes from us; and so time from its store-house pours out an endless succession of the productions of art and genius; and the farther we explore the obscurity, other trophies and other land-marks rise up. It is only our ignorance that fixes a limit — as the mist gathered round the mountain's brow makes us 25 fancy we are treading the edge of the universe! Here was Heloise living at a period when monkish indolence and superstition were at their height — in one of those that are emphatically called the *dark ages*; and yet, as she is led to the altar to make her last fatal vow, expressing her feelings in language 30 quite natural to her, but from which the most accomplished and heroic of our modern females would shrink back with pretty and affected wonder and affright. The glowing and impetuous lines which she murmured, as she passed on, with spontaneous

and rising enthusiasm, were engraven on her heart, familiar to her as her daily thoughts; her mind must have been full of them to overflowing, and at the same time enriched with other stores and sources of knowledge equally elegant and impressive; 5 and we persist, notwithstanding this and a thousand similar circumstances, in indulging our surprise how people could exist, and see, and feel, in those days, without having access to our opportunities and acquirements, and how Shakespeare wrote long after, *in a barbarous age!* The mystery in this case is of 10 our own making. We are struck with astonishment at finding a fine moral sentiment or a noble image nervously expressed in an author of the age of Queen Elizabeth; not considering that, independently of nature and feeling, which are the same in all periods, the writers of that day, who were generally men of 15 education and learning, had such models before them as the one that has been just referred to — were thoroughly acquainted with those masters of classic thought and language, compared with whom, in all that relates to the artificial graces of composition, the most studied of the moderns are little better than 20 Goths and Vandals. It is true, we have lost sight of, and neglected the former, because the latter have, in a great degree, superseded them, as the elevations nearest to us intercept those farthest off; but our not availing ourselves of this vantage-ground is no reason why our forefathers should not (who had 25 not our superfluity of choice), and most assuredly they did study and cherish the precious fragments of antiquity, collected together in their time, “like sunken wreck and sumless treasures;” and while they did this, we need be at no loss to account for any examples of grace, of force, or dignity in their writings, 30 if these must always be traced back to a previous source. One age cannot understand how another could subsist without its lights, as one country thinks every other must be poor for want of its physical productions. This is a narrow and superficial view of the subject: we should by all means rise above it.

I am not for devoting the whole of our time to the study of the classics, or of any other set of writers, to the exclusion and neglect of nature; but I think we should turn our thoughts enough that way to convince us of the existence of genius and learning before our time, and to cure us of an overweening conceit of ourselves, and of a contemptuous opinion of the world at large. Every civilised age and country (and of these there is not one, but a hundred) has its literature, its arts, its comforts, large and ample, though we may know nothing of them; nor is it (except for our own sakes) important that we should. 10

Books have been so multiplied in our days (like the Vanity Fair of knowledge), and we have made such progress beyond ourselves in some points, that it seems at first glance as if we had monopolised every possible advantage, and the rest of the world must be left destitute and in darkness. This is the *cock-neyism* (with leave be it spoken) of the nineteenth century. There is a tone of smartness and piquancy in modern writing, to which former examples may, in one sense, appear flat and pedantic. Our allusions are more pointed and personal: the ancients are, in this respect, formal and prosaic personages. Some one, not long ago, in this vulgar, shallow spirit of criticism (which sees every thing from its own point of view), said that the tragedies of Sophocles and Æschylus were about as good as the pieces brought out at Sadler's Wells or the Adelphi Theatre. An oration of Demosthenes is thought dry and meagre, because it is not "full of wise saws and modern instances:" one of Cicero's is objected to as flimsy and extravagant, for the same reason. There is a style in one age which does not fall in with the taste of the public in another, as it requires greater effeminacy and softness, greater severity or simplicity, greater force or refinement. Guido was more admired than Raphael in his day, because the manners were grown softer without the strength: Sir Peter Lely was thought in his to have eclipsed Vandyke — an opinion that no one holds at present: Holbein's faces must be allowed 15 20 25 30

to be very different from Sir Thomas Lawrence's — yet the one was the favourite painter of Henry VIII., as the other is of George IV. What should we say in our time to the *euphuism* of the age of Elizabeth, when style was made a riddle, and the court talked in conundrums? This, as a novelty and a trial of the wits, might take for a while: afterwards, it could only seem absurd. We must always make some allowance for a change of style, which those who are accustomed to read none but works written within the last twenty years neither can nor will make.

10 When a whole generation read, they will read none but contemporary productions. The taste for literature becomes superficial, as it becomes universal and is spread over a larger space. When ten thousand boarding-school girls, who have learned to play on the harpsichord, are brought out in the same season, Rossini

15 will be preferred to Mozart, as the last new composer. I remember a very genteel young couple in the boxes of Drury Lane being very much scandalised some years ago at the phrase in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* — “an insolent piece of paper” — applied to the contents of a letter — it wanted the modern

20 lightness and indifference. Let an old book be ever so good, it treats (generally speaking) of topics that are stale, in a style that has grown “somewhat musty;” of manners that are exploded, probably by the very ridicule thus cast upon them; of persons that no longer figure on the stage; and of interests that have

25 long since given place to others in the infinite fluctuations of human affairs. Longinus complains of the want of interest in the *Odyssey*, because it does not, like the *Iliad*, treat of war. The very complaint we make against the latter is that it treats of nothing else; or that, as Fuseli expresses it, every thing is seen

30 “through the blaze of war.” Books of devotion are no longer read (if we read Irving's *Orations*, it is merely that we may go as a *lounge* to see the man): even attacks on religion are out of date and insipid. Voltaire's jests and the *Jew's Letters* in answer (equal in wit, and more than equal in learning), repose quietly

on the shelf together. We want something in England about Rent and the Poor-Laws, and something in France about the Charter—or Lord Byron. With the attempts, however, to revive superstition and intolerance, a spirit of opposition has been excited, and Pascal's *Provincial Letters* have been once 5 more enlisted into the service. In France you meet with no one who has read the *New Heloise*: the *Princess of Cleves* is not even mentioned in these degenerate days. Is it not provoking with us to see the *Beggars' Opera* cut down to two acts, because some of the allusions are too broad, and others not understood? And 10 in America—that Van Diemen's Land of letters—this sterling satire is hooted off the stage, because, fortunately, they have no such state of matters as it describes before their eyes; and because, unfortunately, they have no conception of any thing but what they see. America is singularly and awkwardly situated in 15 this respect. It is a new country with an old language; and while every thing about them is of a day's growth, they are constantly applying to us to know what to think of it, and taking their opinions from our books and newspapers with a strange mixture of servility and of the spirit of contradiction. They are 20 an independent state in politics: in literature they are still a colony from us—not out of their leading strings, and strangely puzzled how to determine between the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews. We have naturalised some of their writers, who had formed themselves upon us. This is at once a compliment to 25 them and to ourselves. Amidst the scramble and lottery for fame in the present day, besides puffing, which may be regarded as the hot-bed of reputation, another mode has been attempted by *transplanting* it; and writers who are set down as drivellers at home, shoot up great authors on the other side of the water; 30 pack up their all—a title-page and sufficient impudence; and a work, of which the *floci-nauci-nihili-pili-fication*, in Shenstone's phrase, is well known to every competent judge, is *placarded* into eminence, and “flames in the forehead of the morning sky”

on the walls of Paris or St. Petersburg. I dare not mention the instances, but so it is. Some reputations last only while the possessors live, from which one might suppose that they gave themselves a character for genius: others are cried up by their  
5 gossiping acquaintances, as long as they give dinners, and make their houses places of polite resort; and, in general, in our time, a book may be considered to have passed the ordeal that is mentioned at all three months after it is printed. Immortality is not even a dream — a boy's conceit; and posthumous fame  
10 is no more regarded by the author than by his bookseller.<sup>1</sup>

This idle, dissipated turn seems to be a set-off to, or the obvious reaction of, the exclusive admiration of the ancients, which was formerly the fashion: as if the sun of human intellect rose and set at Rome and Athens, and the mind of man  
15 had never exerted itself to any purpose since. The ignorant, as well as the adept, were charmed only with what was obsolete and far-fetched, wrapped up in technical terms and in a learned tongue. Those who spoke and wrote a language which hardly any one at present even understood, must of course be wiser  
20 than we. Time, that brings so many reputations to decay, had embalmed others and rendered them sacred. From an implicit faith and overstrained homage paid to antiquity, we of the modern school have taken too strong a bias to what is new; and divide all wisdom and worth between ourselves and poster-  
25 ity, — not a very formidable rival to our self-love, as we attribute all its advantages to ourselves, though we pretend to owe little or nothing to our predecessors. About the time of the French Revolution, it was agreed that the world had hitherto been in its dotage or its infancy; and that Mr. Godwin, Con-  
30 dorcet, and others were to begin a new race of men — a new

<sup>1</sup> When a certain poet was asked if he thought Lord Byron's name would live three years after he was dead, he answered, "Not three days, Sir!" This was premature: it has lasted above a year. His works have been translated into French, and there is a *Caffé Byron* on the Boulevards. Think of a *Caffé Wordsworth* on the Boulevards!

epoch in society. Every thing up to that period was to be set aside as puerile or barbarous ; or, if there were any traces of thought and manliness now and then discoverable, they were to be regarded with wonder as prodigies — as irregular and fitful starts in that long sleep of reason and night of philosophy. In 5 this liberal spirit Mr. Godwin composed an Essay to prove that, till the publication of *The Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, no one knew how to write a word of common grammar, or a style that was not utterly uncouth, incongruous, and feeble. Addison, Swift, and Junius were included in this censure. The 10 English language itself might be supposed to owe its stability and consistency, its roundness and polish, to the whirling motion of the French Revolution. Those who had gone before us were, like our grandfathers and grandmothers, decrepit, superannuated people, blind and dull ; poor creatures, like flies in winter, with- 15 out pith or marrow in them. The past was barren of interest — had neither thought nor object worthy to arrest our attention ; and the future would be equally a senseless void, except as we projected ourselves and our theories into it. There is nothing I hate more than I do this exclusive, upstart spirit. 20

" By Heavens, I'd rather be  
 A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,  
 So might I, standing on some pleasant lea,  
 Catch glimpses that might make me less forlorn,  
 Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea, 25  
 Or hear Old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

WORDSWORTH'S SONNETS

Neither do I see the good of it even in a personal and interested point of view. By despising all that has preceded us, we teach others to despise ourselves. Where there is no established scale nor rooted faith in excellence, all superiority — our own as well 30 as that of others — soon comes to the ground. By applying the wrong end of the magnifying-glass to all objects indiscriminately, the most respectable dwindle into insignificance, and the best

are confounded with the worst. Learning, no longer supported by opinion, or genius by fame, is cast into the mire, and "trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude." I would rather endure the most blind and bigoted respect for great and illustrious  
5 names, than that pitiful, grovelling humour which has no pride in intellectual excellence, and no pleasure but in decrying those who have given proofs of it, and reducing them to its own level. If, with the diffusion of knowledge, we do not gain an enlargement and elevation of views, where is the benefit? If, by tearing  
10 ing asunder names from things, we do not leave even the name or shadow of excellence, it is better to let them remain as they were; for it is better to have something to admire than nothing — names, if not things — the shadow, if not the substance — the tinsel, if not the gold. All can now read and write equally;  
15 and, it is therefore presumed, equally well. Any thing short of this sweeping conclusion is an invidious distinction; and those who claim it for themselves or others are *exclusionists* in letters. Every one at least can call names — can invent a falsehood, or repeat a story against those who have galled their pragmat-  
20 ical pretensions by really adding to the stock of general amusement or instruction. Every one in a crowd has the power to throw dirt; nine out of ten have the inclination. It is curious that, in an age when the most universally-admitted claim to public distinction is literary merit, the attaining this distinction is almost  
25 a sure title to public contempt and obloquy.<sup>1</sup> They cry you up, because you are unknown, and do not excite their jealousy; and run you down, when they have thus distinguished you, out of envy and spleen at the very idol they have set up. A public favourite is "kept like an apple in the jaw of an ape — first  
30 mouthed, to be afterwards swallowed. When they need what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again." At first they think only of the pleasure or

<sup>1</sup> Is not this partly owing to the disappointment of the public at finding any defect in their idol?

advantage they receive : but, on reflection, they are mortified at the superiority implied in this involuntary concession, and are determined to be even with you the very first opportunity. What is the prevailing spirit of modern literature ? To defame men of letters. What are the publications that succeed ? Those 5 that pretend to teach the public that the persons they have been accustomed unwittingly to look up to as the lights of the earth are no better than themselves, or a set of vagabonds or miscreants that should be hunted out of society.<sup>1</sup> Hence men of letters, losing their self-respect, become government-tools, and prosti- 10 tute their talents to the most infamous purposes, or turn *dandy scribblers*, and set up for gentlemen authors in their own defence. I like the Order of the Jesuits better than this : they made themselves respected by the laity, kept their own secret, and did not prey on one another. Resume then, oh ! Learning, thy 15 robe pontifical ; clothe thyself in pride and purple ; join the sacred to the profane ; wield both worlds ; instead of twopenny trash and mechanics' magazines, issue bulls and decretals ; say not, let there be light, but darkness visible ; draw a bandage

<sup>1</sup> An old friend of mine, when he read the abuse and billingsgate poured out in certain Tory publications, used to congratulate himself upon it as a favourable sign of the times, and of the progressive improvement of our manners. Where we now called names, we formerly burnt each other at a stake : and all the malice of the heart flew to the tongue and vented itself in scolding, instead of crusades and *auto-da-fés* — the nobler revenge of our ancestors for a difference of opinion. An author now libels a prince ; and, if he takes the law of him or throws him into gaol, it is looked upon as a harsh and ungentlemanly proceeding. He, therefore, gets a dirty Secretary to employ a dirty bookseller, to hire a set of dirty scribblers to pelt him with dirt and cover him with blackguard epithets — till he is hardly in a condition to walk the streets. This is hard measure, no doubt, and base ingratitude on the part of the public, according to the imaginary dignity and natural precedence which authors take of kings ; but the latter are men, and will have their revenge where they can get it. They have no longer their old summary appeal — their will may still be good — to the dungeon and the dagger. Those who "speak evil of dignities" may, therefore, think themselves well off in being merely *sent to Coventry* : and, besides, if they have *pluck* they can makè a Parthian retreat, and shoot poisoned arrows behind them. The good people of Florence lift up their hands when they are shewn the caricatures in the Queen's Matrimonial-Ladder, and ask if they are really a likeness of the King ?

over the eyes of the ignorant and unlettered ; hang the terrors of superstition and despotism over them ; — and for thy pains they will bless thee : children will pull off their caps as thou dost pass ; women will courtesy ; the old will wipe their beards ;  
5 and thou wilt rule once more over the base serving people, clowns, and nobles, with a rod of iron !

## ON DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE

Those people who are uncomfortable in themselves are disagreeable to others. I do not here mean to speak of persons who offend intentionally, or are obnoxious to dislike from some palpable defect of mind or body, ugliness, pride, ill-humour, &c., — but of those who are disagreeable in spite of them- 5 selves, and, as it might appear, with almost every qualification to recommend them to others. This want of success is owing chiefly to something in what is called their *manner*; and this again has its foundation in a certain cross-grained and unsocial- 10 able state of feeling on their part, which influences us, perhaps, without our distinctly adverting to it. The mind is a finer instrument than we sometimes suppose it, and is not only swayed by overt acts and tangible proofs, but has an instinctive feeling of the air of truth. We find many individuals in whose company we pass our time, and have no particular fault to find 15 with their understandings or character, and yet we are never thoroughly satisfied with them: the reason will turn out to be, upon examination, that they are never thoroughly satisfied with themselves, but uneasy and out of sorts all the time; and this makes us uneasy with them, without our reflecting on, or being 20 able to discover the cause.

Thus, for instance, we meet with persons who do us a number of kindnesses; who shew us every mark of respect and good-will, who are friendly and serviceable, — and yet we do not feel grateful to them, after all. We reproach ourselves with 25 this as caprice or insensibility, and try to get the better of it; but there is something in their way of doing things that prevents us from feeling cordial or sincerely obliged to them.

We think them very worthy people, and would be glad of an opportunity to do them a good turn if it were in our power ; but we cannot get beyond this : the utmost we can do is to save appearances, and not come to an open rupture with them.

5 The truth is, in all such cases, we do not sympathise (as we ought) with them, because they do not sympathise (as they ought) with us. They have done what they did from a sense of duty in a cold dry manner, or from a meddling busybody humour ; or to shew their superiority over us, or to patronise

10 our infirmity ; or they have dropped some hint by the way, or blundered upon some topic they should not, and have shewn, by one means or other, that they were occupied with any thing but the pleasure they were affording us, or a delicate attention to our feelings. Such persons may be styled *friendly grievances*.

15 They are commonly people of low spirits and disappointed views, who see the discouraging side of human life, and, with the best intentions in the world, contrive to make every thing they have to do with uncomfortable. They are alive to your distress, and take pains to remove it ; but they have no satis-

20 faction in the gaiety and ease they have communicated, and are on the *look-out* for some new occasion of signaling their zeal ; nor are they backward to insinuate that you will soon have need of their assistance, to guard you against running into fresh difficulties, or to extricate you from them. From large benevo-

25 lence of soul and "discourse of reason, looking before and after," they are continually reminding you of something that has gone wrong in time past, or that may do so in that which is to come, and are surprised that their awkward hints, sly inuendos, blunt questions, and solemn features do not excite all the

30 complacency and mutual good understanding in you which it is intended that they should. When they make themselves miserable on your account, it is hard that you will not lend them your countenance and support. This deplorable humour of theirs does not hit any one else. They are useful, but not

agreeable people ; they may assist you in your affairs, but they depress and tyrannise over your feelings. When they have made you happy, they will not let you be so — have no enjoyment of the good they have done — will on no account part with their melancholy and desponding tone — and, by their mawkish insensibility and doleful grimaces, throw a damp over the triumph they are called upon to celebrate. They would keep you in hot water, that they may help you out of it. They will nurse you in a fit of sickness (congenial sufferers ! ) — arbitrate a law-suit for you, and embroil you deeper — procure you a loan of money ; — but all the while they are only delighted with rubbing the sore place, and casting the colour of your mental or other disorders. “ The whole need not a physician ; ” and, being once placed at ease and comfort, they have no farther use for you as subjects for their singular beneficence, and you are not sorry to be quit of their tiresome interference. The old proverb, *A friend in need is a friend indeed*, is not verified in them. The class of persons here spoken of are the very reverse of *summer-friends*, who court you in prosperity, flatter your vanity, are the humble servants of your follies, never see or allude to any thing wrong, minister to your gaiety, smooth over every difficulty, and, with the slightest approach of misfortune or of any thing unpleasant, take French leave : —

“ As when, in prime of June, a burnished fly,  
 Sprung from the meads, o’er which he sweeps along,  
 Cheered by the breathing bloom and vital sky,  
 Tunes up amid these airy halls his song,  
 Soothing at first the gay reposing throng ;  
 And oft he sips their bowl, or nearly drowned,  
 He thence recovering drives their beds among,  
 And scares their tender sleep with trump profound ;  
 Then out again he flies to wing his mazy round.”

THOMSON’S CASTLE OF INDOLENCE

However we may despise such triflers, yet we regret them more than those well-meaning friends on whom a dull melancholy

vapour hangs, that drags them and every one about them to the ground.

Again, there are those who might be very agreeable people, if they had but spirit to be so ; but there is a narrow, unaspiring, under-bred tone in all they say or do. They have great sense and information — abound in a knowledge of character — have a fund of anecdote — are unexceptionable in manners and appearance — and yet we cannot make up our minds to like them : we are not glad to see them, nor sorry when they go away. Our familiarity with them, however great, wants the principle of cement, which is a certain appearance of frank cordiality and social enjoyment. They have no pleasure in the subjects of their own thoughts, and therefore can communicate none to others. There is a dry, husky, grating manner — a pettiness of detail — a tenaciousness of particulars, however trifling or unpleasant — a disposition to cavil — an aversion to enlarged and liberal views of things — in short, a hard, painful, unbending *matter-of-factness*, from which the spirit and effect are banished, and the letter only is attended to, which makes it impossible to sympathise with their discourse. To make conversation interesting or agreeable, there is required either the habitual tone of good company, which gives a favourable colouring to every thing — or the warmth and enthusiasm of genius, which, though it may occasionally offend or be thrown off its guard, makes amends by its rapturous flights, and flings a glancing light upon all things. The literal and *dogged* style of conversation resembles that of a French picture, or its mechanical fidelity is like evidence given in a court of justice, or a police report.

From the literal to the plain-spoken, the transition is easy. The most efficient weapon of offence is truth. Those who deal in dry and repulsive matters-of-fact, tire out their friends ; those who blurt out hard and home truths, make themselves mortal enemies wherever they come. There are your blunt, honest creatures, who omit no opportunity of letting you know their

minds, and are sure to tell you all the ill, and conceal all the good they hear of you. They would not flatter you for the world, and to caution you against the malice of others, they think the province of a friend. This is not candour, but impudence; and yet they think it odd you are not charmed with 5 their unreserved communicativeness of disposition. Gossips and tale-bearers, on the contrary, who supply the *tittle-tattle* of the neighbourhood, flatter you to your face, and laugh at you behind your back, are welcome and agreeable guests in all companies. Though you know it will be your turn next, yet for the sake of 10 the immediate gratification, you are contented to pay your share of the public tax upon character, and are better pleased with the falsehoods that never reach your ears, than with the truths that others (less complaisant and more sincere) utter to your face — so short-sighted and willing to be imposed upon is our self-love! 15 There is a man, who has the air of not being convinced without an argument: you avoid him as if he were a lion in your path. There is another, who asks you fifty questions as to the commonest things you advance: you would sooner pardon a fellow who held a pistol to your breast and demanded your money. 20 No one regards a turnpike-keeper, or a custom-house officer, with a friendly eye: he who stops you in an excursion of fancy, or ransacks the articles of your belief obstinately and churlishly, to distinguish the spurious from the genuine, is still more your foe. These inquisitors and cross-examiners upon system make 25 ten enemies for every controversy in which they engage. The world dread nothing so much as being convinced of their errors. In doing them this piece of service, you make war equally on their prejudices, their interests, their pride, and indolence. You not only set up for a superiority of understanding over them, 30 which they hate, but you deprive them of their ordinary grounds of action, their topics of discourse, of their confidence in themselves, and those to whom they have been accustomed to look up for instruction and advice. It is making children of them.

You unhinge all their established opinions and trains of thought ; and after leaving them in this listless, vacant, unsettled state — dissatisfied with their own notions and shocked at yours — you expect them to court and be delighted with your company, because, forsooth, you have only expressed your sincere and conscientious convictions. Mankind are not deceived by professions, unless they choose. They think that this pill of true doctrine, however it may be gilded over, is full of gall and bitterness to them ; and, again, it is a maxim of which the vulgar are firmly persuaded, that plain-speaking (as it is called) is, nine parts in ten, spleen and self-opinion ; and the other part, perhaps, honesty. Those who will not abate an inch in argument, and are always seeking to recover the wind of you, are, in the eye of the world, disagreeable, unconscionable people, who ought to be *sent to Coventry*, or left to wrangle by themselves. No persons, however, are more averse to contradiction than these same dogmatists. What shews our susceptibility on this point is, that there is no flattery so adroit or effectual as that of implicit assent. Any one, however mean his capacity or ill-qualified to judge, who gives way to all our sentiments, and never seems to think but as we do, is indeed an *alter idem* — another self ; and we admit him without scruple into our entire confidence, “ yea, into our heart of hearts.”

It is the same in books. Those which, under the disguise of plain-speaking, vent paradoxes, and set their faces against the common-sense of mankind, are neither “ the volumes

—— “ that enrich the shops,  
That pass with approbation through the land ; ”

nor, I fear, can it be added —

“ That bring their authors an immortal fame.”

They excite a clamour and opposition at first, and are in general soon consigned to oblivion. Even if the opinions are in the end adopted, the authors gain little by it, and their names remain in

their original obloquy ; for the public will own no obligations to such ungracious benefactors. In like manner, there are many books written in a very delightful vein, though with little in them, and that are accordingly popular. Their principle is to please, and not to offend ; and they succeed in both objects. 5 We are contented with the deference shown to our feelings for the time, and grant a truce both to wit and wisdom. The "courteous reader" and the good-natured author are well matched in this instance, and find their account in mutual tenderness and forbearance to each other's infirmities. I am not sure 10 that Walton's Angler is not a book of this last description —

"That dallies with the innocence of thought,  
Like the old age."

Hobbes and Mandeville are in the opposite extreme, and have met with a correspondent fate. The Tatler and Spectator are 15 in the golden mean, carry instruction as far as it can go without shocking, and give the most exquisite pleasure without one particle of pain. "*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please,*" is a maxim equally applicable to the study or the drawing-room. Thus also we see actors of very small pretensions, and who 20 have scarce any other merit than that of being on good terms with themselves, and in high good humour with their parts (though they hardly understand a word of them), who are universal favourites with the audience. Others, who are masters of their art, and in whom no slip or flaw can be detected, you have 25 no pleasure in seeing, from something dry, repulsive, and unciliating in their manner ; and you almost hate the very mention of their names, as an unavailing appeal to your candid decision in their favour, and as taxing you with injustice for refusing it.

We may observe persons who seem to take a peculiar delight 30 in the *disagreeable*. They catch all sorts of uncouth tones and gestures, the manners and dialect of clowns and hoydens, and aim at vulgarity as desperately as others ape gentility. [This is

what is often understood by a *love of low life*.] They say the most unwarrantable things, without meaning or feeling what they say. What startles or shocks other people, is to them a sport—an amusing excitement—a fillip to their constitutions; 5 and from the bluntness of their perceptions, and a certain wilfulness of spirit, not being able to enter into the refined and agreeable, they make a merit of despising every thing of the kind. Masculine women, for example, are those who, not being distinguished by the charms and delicacy of the sex, affect a 10 superiority over it by throwing aside all decorum. We also find another class, who continually do and say what they ought not, and what they do not intend, and who are governed almost entirely by an instinct of absurdity. Owing to a perversity of imagination or irritability of nerve, the idea that a thing is im- 15 proper acts as a provocation to it: the fear of committing a blunder is so strong, that in their agitation they *bolt* out whatever is uppermost in their minds, before they are aware of the consequence. The dread of something wrong haunts and rivets their attention to it; and an uneasy, morbid apprehensiveness 20 of temper takes away their self-possession, and hurries them into the very mistakes they are most anxious to avoid.

If we look about us, and ask who are the agreeable and disagreeable people in the world, we shall see that it does not depend on their virtues or vices—their understanding or stu- 25 pidity—but as much on the degree of pleasure or pain they seem to feel in ordinary social intercourse. What signify all the good qualities any one possesses, if he is none the better for them himself? If the cause is so delightful, the effect ought to be so too. We enjoy a friend's society only in proportion as he 30 is satisfied with ours. Even wit, however it may startle, is only agreeable as it is sheathed in good-humour. There are a kind of *intellectual stammerers*, who are delivered of their good things with pain and effort; and consequently what costs them such evident uneasiness does not impart unmixed delight to the

bystanders. There are those, on the contrary, whose sallies cost them nothing — who abound in a flow of pleasantry and good-humour; and who float down the stream with them carelessly and triumphantly, —

“ Wit at the helm, and Pleasure at the prow.”

5

Perhaps it may be said of English wit in general, that it too much resembles pointed lead: after all, there is something heavy and dull in it! The race of small wits are not the least agreeable people in the world. They have their little joke to themselves, enjoy it, and do not set up any preposterous pre- 10 tensions to thwart the current of our self-love. Toad-eating is accounted a thriving profession; and a *butt*, according to the Spectator, is a highly useful member of society — as one who takes whatever is said of him in good part, and as necessary to conduct off the spleen and superfluous petulance of the company. 15

Opposed to these are the swaggering bullies — the licensed wits — the free-thinkers — the loud talkers, who, in the jockey phrase, have *lost their mouths*, and cannot be reined in by any regard to decency or common-sense. The more obnoxious the subject, the more are they charmed with it, converting their want of feeling 20 into a proof of superiority to vulgar prejudice and squeamish affectation. But there is an unseemly exposure of the mind, as well as of the body. There are some objects that shock the sense, and cannot with propriety be mentioned: there are naked truths that offend the mind, and ought to be kept out of sight as 25 much as possible. For human nature cannot bear to be too hardly pressed upon. One of these cynical truisms, when brought forward to the world, may be forgiven as a slip of the pen: a succession of them, denoting a deliberate purpose and *malice prepense*, must ruin any writer. Lord Byron had got into an irregular 30 course of these a little before his death — seemed desirous, in imitation of Mr. Shelley, to run the gauntlet of public obloquy — and, at the same time, wishing to screen himself from the

censure he defied, dedicated his Cain to Sir Walter Scott — a pretty godfather to such a bantling !

Some persons are of so teasing and fidgetty a turn of mind, that they do not give you a moment's rest. Every thing goes  
15 wrong with them. They complain of a headache or the weather. They take up a book, and lay it down again — venture an opinion, and retract it before they have half done — offer to serve you, and prevent some one else from doing it. If you dine with them at a tavern, in order to be more at your ease,  
10 the fish is too little done — the sauce is not the right one ; they ask for a sort of wine which they think is not to be had, or if it is, after some trouble, procured, do not touch it ; they give the waiter fifty contradictory orders, and are restless and sit on thorns the whole of dinner-time. All this is owing to a want of  
15 robust health, and of a strong spirit of enjoyment ; it is a fastidious habit of mind, produced by a valetudinary habit of body : they are out of sorts with every thing, and of course their ill-humour and captiousness communicates itself to you, who are as little delighted with them as they are with other things.  
20 Another sort of people, equally objectionable with this helpless class, who are disconcerted by a shower of rain or stopped by an insect's wing, are those who, in the opposite spirit, will have every thing their own way, and carry all before them — who cannot brook the slightest shadow of opposition — who are always  
25 in the heat of an argument — who knit their brows and clench their teeth in some speculative discussion, as if they were engaged in a personal quarrel — and who, though successful over almost every competitor, seem still to resent the very offer of resistance to their supposed authority, and are as angry as if they had  
30 sustained some premeditated injury. There is an impatience of temper and an intolerance of opinion in this that conciliates neither our affection nor esteem. To such persons nothing appears of any moment but the indulgence of a domineering intellectual superiority to the disregard and discomfiture of their own

and every body else's comfort. Mounted on an abstract proposition, they trample on every courtesy and decency of behaviour ; and though, perhaps, they do not intend the gross personalities they are guilty of, yet they cannot be acquitted of a want of due consideration for others, and of an intolerable egotism in the support of truth and justice. You may hear one of these Quixotic declaimers pleading the cause of humanity in a voice of thunder, or expatiating on the beauty of a Guido with features distorted with rage and scorn. This is not a very amiable or edifying spectacle. 10

There are persons who cannot make friends. Who are they ? Those who cannot be friends. It is not the want of understanding or good-nature, of entertaining or useful qualities, that you complain of : on the contrary, they have probably many points of attraction ; but they have one that neutralises all these — they care nothing about you, and are neither the better nor worse for what you think of them. They manifest no joy at your approach ; and when you leave them, it is with a feeling that they can do just as well without you. This is not sullenness, nor indifference, nor absence of mind ; but they are intent solely on their own thoughts, and you are merely one of the subjects they exercise them upon. They live in society as in a solitude ; and, however their brain works, their pulse beats neither faster nor slower for the common accidents of life. There is, therefore, something cold and repulsive in the air that is about them — like that of marble. In a word, they are *modern philosophers* ; and the modern philosopher is what the pedant was of old — a being who lives in a world of his own, and has no correspondence with this. It is not that such persons have not done you services — you acknowledge it ; it is not that they have said severe things of you — you submit to it as a necessary evil : but it is the cool manner in which the whole is done that annoys you — the speculating upon you, as if you were nobody — the regarding you, with a view to an experiment *in corpore vili* — the principle of 30

dissection — the determination to spare no blemishes — to cut you down to your real standard ; — in short, the utter absence of the partiality of friendship, the blind enthusiasm of affection, or the delicacy of common decency, that whether they “ hew  
 5 you as a carcase fit for hounds, or carve you as a dish fit for the gods,” the operation on your feelings and your sense of obligation is just the same ; and, whether they are demons or angels in themselves, you wish them equally *at the devil* !

Other persons of worth and sense give way to mere violence  
 10 of temperament (with which the understanding has nothing to do) — are burnt up with a perpetual fury — repel and throw you to a distance by their restless, whirling motion — so that you dare not go near them, or feel as uneasy in their company as if you stood on the edge of a volcano. They have their *tem-*  
 15 *pura mollia fandi* ; but then what a stir may you not expect the next moment ! Nothing is less inviting or less comfortable than this state of uncertainty and apprehension. Then there are those who never approach you without the most alarming advice or information, telling you that you are in a dying way, or that your  
 20 affairs are on the point of ruin, by way of disburthening their consciences ; and others, who give you to understand much the same thing as a good joke, out of sheer impertinence, constitutional vivacity, and want of something to say. All these, it must be confessed, are disagreeable people ; and you repay their over-  
 25 anxiety or total forgetfulness of you, by a determination to cut them as speedily as possible. We meet with instances of persons who overpower you by a sort of boisterous mirth and rude animal spirits, with whose ordinary state of excitement it is as impossible to keep up as with that of any one really intoxicated ;  
 30 and with others who seem scarce alive — who take no pleasure or interest in any thing — who are born to exemplify the maxim,

“ Not to admire is all the art I know

To make men happy, or to keep them so,” —

and whose mawkish insensibility or sullen scorn are equally

annoying. In general, all people brought up in remote country places, where life is crude and harsh — all sectaries — all partisans of a losing cause, are discontented and disagreeable. Commend me above all to the Westminster School of Reform, whose blood runs as cold in their veins as the torpedo's, and 5 whose touch jars like it. Catholics are, upon the whole, more amiable than Protestants — foreigners than English people. Among ourselves, the Scotch, as a nation, are particularly disagreeable. They hate every appearance of comfort themselves, and refuse it to others. Their climate, their religion, and their 10 habits are equally averse to pleasure. Their manners are either distinguished by a fawning sycophancy (to gain their own ends, and conceal their natural defects), that makes one sick ; or by a morose unbending callousness, that makes one shudder. I had forgot to mention two other descriptions of persons who fall under 15 the scope of this essay : — those who take up a subject and run on with it interminably, without knowing whether their hearers care one word about it, or in the least minding what reception their oratory meets with — these are pretty generally voted *bored* (mostly German ones) ; — and others, who may be designated as 20 practical paradox-mongers — who discard the “milk of human kindness,” and an attention to common observances, from all their actions, as effeminate and puling — who wear a white hat as a mark of superior understanding, and carry home a handkerchief-full of mushrooms in the top of it as an original discovery 25 — who give you craw-fish for supper instead of lobsters ; seek their company in a garret, and over a gin-bottle, to avoid the imputation of affecting genteel society ; and discard them after a term of years, and warn others against them, as being *honest fellows*, which is thought a vulgar prejudice. This is carrying the harsh 30 and repulsive even beyond the disagreeable — to the hateful. Such persons are generally people of common-place understandings, obtuse feelings, and inordinate vanity. They are formidable if they get you in their power — otherwise, they are only to be laughed at.

There are a vast number who are disagreeable from meanness of spirit, downright insolence, from slovenliness of dress or disgusting tricks, from folly or ignorance: but these causes are positive moral or physical defects, and I only meant to speak of  
5 that repulsiveness of manners which arises from want of tact and sympathy with others. So far of friendship: a word, if I durst, of love. Gallantry to women (the sure road to their favour) is nothing but the appearance of extreme devotion to all their wants and wishes — a delight in their satisfaction,  
10 and a confidence in yourself, as being able to contribute towards it. The slightest indifference with regard to them, or distrust of yourself, are equally fatal. The amiable is the voluptuous in looks, manner, or words. No face that exhibits this kind of expression — whether lively or serious, obvious or suppressed,  
15 will be thought ugly — no address, awkward — no lover who approaches every woman he meets as his mistress, will be unsuccessful. Diffidence and awkwardness are the two antidotes to love.

To please universally, we must be pleased with ourselves and  
20 others. There should be a tinge of the coxcomb, an oil of self-complacency, an anticipation of success — there should be no gloom, no moroseness, no shyness — in short, there should be very little of an Englishman, and a good deal of a Frenchman. But though, I believe, this is the receipt, we are none the nearer  
25 making use of it. It is impossible for those who are naturally disagreeable ever to become otherwise. This is some consolation, as it may save a world of useless pains and anxiety. "*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please,*" is a true maxim; but it does not follow that it is in the power of all  
30 to practise it. A vain man, who thinks he is endeavouring to please, is only endeavouring to shine, and is still farther from the mark. An irritable man, who puts a check upon himself, only grows dull, and loses spirit to be anything. Good temper and a happy spirit (which are the indispensable requisites) can

no more be commanded than good health or good looks ; and though the plain and sickly need not distort their features, and may abstain from excess, this is all they can do. The utmost a disagreeable person can do is to hope to be less disagreeable than with care and study he might become, and to pass unnoticed in society. With this negative character he should be contented, and may build his fame and happiness on other things.

I will conclude with a character of men who neither please nor aspire to please anybody, and who can come in nowhere so properly as at the fag-end of an essay : — I mean that class of discontented but amusing persons, who are infatuated with their own ill success, and reduced to despair by a lucky turn in their favour. While all goes well, they are *like fish out of water*. They have no reliance on or sympathy with their good fortune, and look upon it as a momentary delusion. Let a doubt be thrown on the question, and they begin to be full of lively apprehensions again : let all their hopes vanish, and they feel themselves on firm ground once more. From want of spirit or of habit, their imaginations cannot rise above the low ground of humility — cannot reflect the gay, flaunting tints of the fancy — flag and droop into despondency — and can neither indulge the expectation, nor employ the means of success. Even when it is within their reach, they dare not lay hands upon it ; and shrink from unlooked-for bursts of prosperity, as something of which they are both ashamed and unworthy. The class of *croakers* here spoken of are less delighted at other people's misfortunes than their own. Their neighbours may have some pretensions — they have none. Querulous complaints and anticipations of pleasure are the food on which they live ; and they at last acquire a passion for that which is the favourite theme of their thoughts, and can no more do without it than without the pinch of snuff with which they season their conversation, and enliven the pauses of their daily prognostics.

## ON A SUN-DIAL

"To carve out dials quaintly, point by point." — SHAKESPEARE.

*Horas non numero nisi serenas* — is the motto of a sun-dial near Venice. There is a softness and a harmony in the words and in the thought unparalleled. Of all conceits it is surely the  
5 most classical. "I count only the hours that are serene." What a bland and care-dispelling feeling! How the shadows seem to fade on the dial-plate as the sky lours, and time presents only a blank unless as its progress is marked by what is joyous, and all that is not happy sinks into oblivion! What a fine lesson is con-  
10 veyed to the mind — to take no note of time but by its benefits, to watch only for the smiles and neglect the frowns of fate, to compose our lives of bright and gentle moments, turning always to the sunny side of things, and letting the rest slip from our imaginations, unheeded or forgotten! How different from the  
15 common art of self-tormenting! For myself, as I rode along the Brenta, while the sun shone hot upon its sluggish, slimy waves, my sensations were far from comfortable; but the reading this inscription on the side of a glaring wall in an instant restored me to myself; and still, whenever I think of or repeat  
20 it, it has the power of wafting me into the region of pure and blissful abstraction. I cannot help fancying it to be a legend of Popish superstition. Some monk of the dark ages must have invented and bequeathed it to us, who, loitering in trim gardens and watching the silent march of time, as his fruits ripened in  
25 the sun or his flowers scented the balmy air, felt a mild languor pervade his senses, and having little to do or to care for, determined (in imitation of his sun-dial) to efface that little from his

thoughts or draw a veil over it, making of his life one long dream of quiet! *Horas non numero nisi serenas* — he might repeat, when the heavens were overcast and the gathering storm scattered the falling leaves, and turn to his books and wrap himself in his golden studies! Out of some such mood of mind, 5 indolent, elegant, thoughtful, this exquisite device (speaking volumes) must have originated.

Of the several modes of counting time, that by the sun-dial is perhaps the most apposite and striking, if not the most convenient or comprehensive. It does not obtrude its observations, 10 though it "morals on the time," and, by its stationary character, forms a contrast to the most fleeting of all essences. It stands *sub dio* — under the marble air, and there is some connexion between the image of infinity and eternity. I should also like to have a sunflower growing near it with bees fluttering round.<sup>1</sup> It 15 should be of iron to denote duration, and have a dull, leaden look. I hate a sun-dial made of wood, which is rather calculated to show the variations of the seasons, than the progress of time, slow, silent, imperceptible, chequered with light and shade. If our hours were all serene, we might probably take almost as 20 little note of them, as the dial does of those that are clouded. It is the shadow thrown across, that gives us warning of their flight. Otherwise, our impressions would take the same undistinguishable hue; we should scarce be conscious of our existence. Those who have had none of the cares of this life to 25 harass and disturb them, have been obliged to have recourse to the hopes and fears of the next to enliven the prospect before them. Most of the methods for measuring the lapse of time have, I believe, been the contrivance of monks and religious recluses, who, finding time hang heavy on their hands, were 30 at some pains to see how they got rid of it. The hour-glass is, I suspect, an older invention; and it is certainly the most

<sup>1</sup> Is this a verbal fallacy? Or in the close, retired, sheltered scene which I have imagined to myself, is not the sun-flower a natural accompaniment of the sun-dial?

defective of all. Its creeping sands are not indeed an unapt emblem of the minute, countless portions of our existence; and the manner in which they gradually slide through the hollow glass and diminish in number till not a single one is left, also illustrates the way in which our years slip from us by stealth: but as a mechanical invention, it is rather a hindrance than a help, for it requires to have the time, of which it pretends to count the precious moments, taken up in attention to itself, and in seeing that when one end of the glass is empty, we turn it round, in order that it may go on again, or else all our labour is lost, and we must wait for some other mode of ascertaining the time before we can recover our reckoning and proceed as before. The philosopher in his cell, the cottager at her spinning-wheel must, however, find an invaluable acquisition in this "companion of the lonely hour," as it has been called,<sup>1</sup> which not only serves to tell how the time goes, but to fill up its vacancies. What a treasure must not the little box seem to hold, as if it were a sacred deposit of the very grains and fleeting sands of life! What a business, in lieu of other more important avocations, to see it out to the last sand, and then to renew the process again on the instant, that there may not be the least flaw or error in the account! What a strong sense must be brought home to the mind of the value and irrecoverable nature of the time that is fled; what a thrilling, incessant consciousness of the slippery tenure by which we hold what remains of it! Our very existence must seem crumbling to atoms, and running down (without a miraculous reprieve) to the last fragment. "Dust to dust and ashes to ashes" is a text that might be fairly inscribed on an hour-glass: it is ordinarily associated with the scythe of Time and a Death's-head, as a *Memento mori*; and has, no doubt, furnished many a tacit

<sup>1</sup> "Once more, companion of the lonely hour,  
I'll turn thee up again,"

hint to the apprehensive and visionary enthusiast in favour of a resurrection to another life!

The French give a different turn to things, less *sombre* and less edifying. A common and also a very pleasing ornament to a clock, in Paris, is a figure of Time seated in a boat which Cupid is rowing along, with the motto, *L'Amour fait passer le Tems* — which the wits again have travestied into *Le Tems fait passer L'Amour*. All this is ingenious and well; but it wants sentiment. I like a people who have something that they love and something that they hate, and with whom every thing is not alike a matter of indifference or *pour passer le tems*. The French attach no importance to any thing, except for the moment; they are only thinking how they shall get rid of one sensation for another; all their ideas are *in transitu*. Every thing is detached, nothing is accumulated. It would be a million of years before a Frenchman would think of the *Horas non numero nisi serenas*. Its impassioned repose and *ideal* voluptuousness are as far from their breasts as the poetry of that line in Shakspeare — “How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon that bank!” They never arrive at the classical — or the romantic. They blow the bubbles of vanity, fashion, and pleasure; but they do not expand their perceptions into refinement, or strengthen them into solidity. Where there is nothing fine in the ground-work of the imagination, nothing fine in the superstructure can be produced. They are light, airy, fanciful (to give them their due) — but when they attempt to be serious (beyond mere good sense) they are either dull or extravagant. When the volatile salt has flown off, nothing but a *caput mortuum* remains. They have infinite crotchets and caprices with their clocks and watches, which seem made for any thing but to tell the hour — gold-repeaters, watches with metal covers, clocks with hands to count the seconds. There is no escaping from quackery and impertinence, even in our attempts to calculate the waste of time. The years gallop fast enough for me, without remarking every moment as it flies; and farther,

I must say I dislike a watch (whether of French or English manufacture) that comes to me like a footpad with its face muffled, and does not present its clear, open aspect like a friend, and point with its finger to the time of day. All this opening and shutting of dull, heavy cases (under pretence that the glass-lid is liable to be broken, or lets in the dust or air and obstructs the movement of the watch), is not to husband time, but to give trouble. It is mere pomposity and self-importance, like consulting a mysterious oracle that one carries about with one in one's pocket, instead of asking a common question of an acquaintance or companion. There are two clocks which strike the hour in the room where I am. This I do not like. In the first place, I do not want to be reminded twice how the time goes (it is like the second tap of a saucy servant at your door when perhaps you have no wish to get up): in the next place, it is starting a difference of opinion on the subject, and I am averse to every appearance of wrangling and disputation. Time moves on the same, whatever disparity there may be in our mode of keeping count of it, like true fame in spite of the cavils and contradictions of the critics. I am no friend to repeating watches. The only pleasant association I have with them is the account given by Rousseau of some French lady, who sat up reading the *New Heloise* when it first came out, and ordering her maid to sound the repeater, found it was too late to go to bed, and continued reading on till morning. Yet how different is the interest excited by this story from the account which Rousseau somewhere else gives of his sitting up with his father reading romances, when a boy, till they were startled by the swallows twittering in their nests at day-break, and the father cried out, half angry and ashamed — "*Allons, mon fils; je suis plus enfant que toi!*" In general, I have heard repeating watches sounded in stage-coaches at night, when some fellow-traveller suddenly awaking and wondering what was the hour, another has very deliberately taken out his watch, and pressing the

spring, it has counted out the time; each petty stroke acting like a sharp puncture on the ear, and informing me of the dreary hours I had already passed, and of the more dreary ones I had to wait till morning.

The great advantage, it is true, which clocks have over 5 watches and other dumb reckoners of time is, that for the most part they strike the hour — that they are as it were the mouth-pieces of time; that they not only point it to the eye, but impress it on the ear; that they “lend it both an under-  
standing and a tongue.” Time thus speaks to us in an audible 10 and warning voice. Objects of sight are easily distinguished by the sense, and suggest useful reflections to the mind; sounds, from their intermittent nature, and perhaps other causes, appeal more to the imagination, and strike upon the heart. But to do this, they must be unexpected and involuntary — there must be 15 no trick in the case — they should not be squeezed out with a finger and a thumb; there should be nothing optional, personal in their occurrence; they should be like stern, inflexible monitors, that nothing can prevent from discharging their duty. Surely, if there is any thing with which we should not mix up our vanity 20 and self-confidence, it is with Time, the most independent of all things. All the sublimity, all the superstition that hang upon this palpable mode of announcing its flight, are chiefly attached to this circumstance. Time would lose its abstracted character, if we kept it like a curiosity or a jack-in-a-box: its prophetic 25 warnings would have no effect, if it obviously spoke only at our prompting, like a paltry ventriloquism. The clock that tells the coming, dreaded hour — the castle bell, that “with its brazen throat and iron tongue, sounds one unto the drowsy ear of night” — the curfew, “swinging slow with sullen roar” o’er 30 wizard stream or fountain, are like a voice from other worlds, big with unknown events. The last sound, which is still kept up as an old custom in many parts of England, is a great favourite with me. I used to hear it when a boy. It tells a

tale of other times. The days that are past, the generations that are gone, the tangled forest glades and hamlets brown of my native country, the woodsman's art, the Norman warrior armed for the battle or in his festive hall, the conqueror's iron rule and peasant's lamp extinguished, all start up at the clamorous peal, and fill my mind with fear and wonder. I confess, nothing at present interests me but what has been — the recollection of the impressions of my early life, or events long past, of which only the dim traces remain in a smouldering ruin or half-obsolete custom. That *things should be that are now no more*, creates in my mind the most unfeigned astonishment. I cannot solve the mystery of the past, nor exhaust my pleasure in it. The years, the generations to come, are nothing to me. We care no more about the world in the year 2300 than we do about one of the planets. Even George IV. is better than the Earl of Windsor. We might as well make a voyage to the moon as think of stealing a march upon Time with impunity. *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*. Those who are to come after us and push us from the stage seem like upstarts and pretenders, that may be said to exist *in vacuo*, we know not upon what, except as they are blown up with vain and self conceit by their patrons among the moderns. But the ancients are true and *bonâ-fide* people, to whom we are bound by aggregate knowledge and filial ties, and in whom seen by the mellow light of history we feel our own existence doubled and our pride consoled, as we ruminate on the vestiges of the past. The public in general, however, do not carry this speculative indifference about the future to what is to happen to themselves, or to the part they are to act in the busy scene. For my own part, I do ; and the only wish I can form, or that ever prompts the passing sigh, would be to live some of my years over again — they would be those in which I enjoyed and suffered most !

The ticking of a clock in the night has nothing very interesting nor very alarming in it, though superstition has magnified it

into an omen. In a state of vigilance or debility, it preys upon the spirits like the persecution of a teasing pertinacious insect; and haunting the imagination after it has ceased in reality, is converted into the death-watch. Time is rendered vast by contemplating its minute portions thus repeatedly and painfully urged 5 upon its attention, as the ocean in its immensity is composed of water-drops. A clock striking with a clear and silver sound is a great relief in such circumstances, breaks the spell, and resembles a sylph-like and friendly spirit in the room. Foreigners, with all their tricks and contrivances upon clocks and time-pieces, are 10 strangers to the sound of village-bells, though perhaps a people that can dance may dispense with them. They impart a pensive, wayward pleasure to the mind, and are a kind of chronology of happy events, often serious in the retrospect—births, marriages, and so forth. Coleridge calls them “the poor man’s only music.” 15 A village-spire in England peeping from its cluster of trees is always associated in imagination with this cheerful accompaniment, and may be expected to pour its joyous tidings on the gale. In Catholic countries, you are stunned with the everlasting tolling of bells to prayers or for the dead. In the Apennines, 20 and other wild and mountainous districts of Italy, the little chapel-bell with its simple tinkling sound has a romantic and charming effect. The Monks in former times appear to have taken a pride in the construction of bells as well as churches; and some of those of the great cathedrals abroad (as at Cologne and Rouen) 25 may be fairly said to be hoarse with counting the flight of ages. The chimes in Holland are a nuisance. They dance in the hours and the quarters. They leave no respite to the imagination. Before one set has done ringing in your ears, another begins. You do not know whether the hours move or stand still, go back- 30 wards or forwards, so fantastical and perplexing are their accompaniments. Time is a more staid personage, and not so full of gambols. It puts you in mind of a tune with variations, or of an embroidered dress. Surely, nothing is more simple than time.

His march is straightforward; but we should have leisure allowed us to look back upon the distance we have come, and not be counting his steps every moment. Time in Holland is a foolish old fellow with all the antics of a youth, who "goes to church  
 5 in a coranto, and lights his pipe in a cinque-pace." The chimes with us, on the contrary, as they come in every three or four hours, are like stages in the journey of the day. They give a fillip to the lazy, creeping hours, and relieve the lassitude of country-places. At noon, their desultory, trivial song is diffused  
 10 through the hamlet with the odour of rashers of bacon; at the close of day they send the toil-worn sleepers to their beds. Their discontinuance would be a great loss to the thinking or unthinking public. Mr. Wordsworth has painted their effect on the mind when he makes his friend Matthew, in a fit of  
 15 inspired dotage,

"Sing those witty rhymes  
 About the crazy old church-clock  
 And the bewilder'd chimes."

The tolling of the bell for deaths and executions is a fearful  
 20 summons, though, as it announces, not the advance of time but the approach of fate, it happily makes no part of our subject. Otherwise, the "sound of the bell" for Macheath's execution in the "Beggar's Opera," or for that of the Conspirators in "Venice Preserved," with the roll of the drum at a soldier's funeral, and  
 25 a digression to that of my Uncle Toby, as it is so finely described by Sterne, would furnish ample topics to descant upon. If I were a moralist, I might disapprove the ringing in the new and ringing out the old year.

"Why dance ye, mortals, o'er the grave of Time?"

30 St. Paul's bell tolls only for the death of our English kings, or a distinguished personage or two, with long intervals between.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau has admirably described the effect of bells on the imagination in a passage in the Confessions, beginning "*Le son des cloches m'a toujours singulièrement affecté,*" &c.

Those who have no artificial means of ascertaining the progress of time, are in general the most acute in discerning its immediate signs, and are most retentive of individual dates. The mechanical aids to knowledge are not sharpeners of the wits. The understanding of a savage is a kind of natural almanac, and more true in its prognostication of the future. In his mind's eye he sees what has happened or what is likely to happen to him, "as in a map the voyager his course." Those who read the times and seasons in the aspect of the heavens and the configurations of the stars, who count by moons and know when the sun rises and sets, are by no means ignorant of their own affairs or of the common concatenation of events. People in such situations have not their faculties distracted by any multiplicity of inquiries beyond what befalls themselves, and the outward appearances that mark the change. There is, therefore, a simplicity and clearness in the knowledge they possess, which often puzzles the more learned. I am sometimes surprised at a shepherd-boy by the roadside, who sees nothing but the earth and sky, asking me the time of day—he ought to know so much better than any one how far the sun is above the horizon. I suppose he wants to ask a question of a passenger, or to see if he has a watch. Robinson Crusoe lost his reckoning in the monotony of his life and that bewildering dream of solitude, and was fain to have recourse to the notches in a piece of wood. What a diary was his! And how time must have spread its circuit round him, vast and pathless as the ocean!

For myself, I have never had a watch nor any other mode of keeping time in my possession, nor ever wish to learn how time goes. It is a sign I have had little to do, few avocations, few engagements. When I am in a town, I can hear the clock; and when I am in the country, I can listen to the silence. What I like best is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Plain, without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus "with light-winged toys of feathered

Idleness " to melt down hours to moments. Perhaps some such thoughts as I have here set down float before me like motes before my half-shut eyes, or some vivid image of the past by forcible contrast rushes by me — " Diana and her fawn, and all  
5 the glories of the antique world ; " then I start away to prevent the iron from entering my soul, and let fall some tears into that stream of time which separates me farther and farther from all I once loved ! At length I rouse myself from my reverie, and home to dinner, proud of killing time with thought, nay even  
10 without thinking. Somewhat of this idle humour I inherit from my father, though he had not the same freedom from *ennui*, for he was not a metaphysician ; and there were stops and vacant intervals in his being which he did not know how to fill up. He used in these cases, and as an obvious resource, care-  
15 fully to wind up his watch at night, and " with lack-lustre eye " more than once in the course of the day look to see what o'clock it was. Yet he had nothing else in his character in common with the elder Mr. Shandy. Were I to attempt a sketch of him, for my own or the reader's satisfaction, it would be after the  
20 following manner : — but now I recollect, I have done something of the kind once before, and were I to resume the subject here, some bat or owl of a critic, with spectacled gravity, might swear I had stolen the whole of this Essay from myself — or (what is worse) from him ! So I had better let it go as it is.

## ON CANT AND HYPOCRISY

"If to do were as easy as to teach others what were good to be done, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces."

Mr. Addison, it is said, was fond of tippling; and Curl, it is added, when he called on him in the morning, used to ask as a particular favour for a glass of Canary, by way of ingratiating himself, and that the other might have a pretence to join him and finish the bottle. He fell a martyr to this habit, and yet (some persons more nice than wise exclaim), he desired that the young Earl of Warwick might attend him on his death-bed, "to see how a Christian could die!" I see no inconsistency nor hypocrisy in this. A man may be a good Christian, a sound believer, and a sincere lover of virtue, and have, notwithstanding, one or more failings. If he had recommended it to others to get drunk, then I should have said he was a hypocrite, and that his pretended veneration for the Christian religion was a mere cloak put on to suit the purposes of fashion or convenience. His doing what it condemned was no proof of any such thing: "The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak." He is a hypocrite who professes what he does not believe; not he who does not practise all he wishes or approves. It might on the same ground be argued, that a man is a hypocrite who admires Raphael or Shakespeare, because he cannot paint like the one, or write like the other. If any one really despised what he affected outwardly to admire, this would be hypocrisy. If he affected to admire it a great deal more than he really did, this would be cant. Sincerity has to do with the connexion between our words and thoughts, and not between our belief and actions.

The last constantly belie the strongest convictions and resolutions in the best of men ; it is only the base and dishonest who give themselves credit with their tongue, for sentiments and opinions which in their hearts they disown.

5 I do not therefore think that the old theological maxim —  
 “ The greater the sinner, the greater the saint ” — is so utterly unfounded. There is some mixture of truth in it. For as long as man is composed of two parts, body and soul ; and while these are allowed to pull different ways, I see no reason why, in proportion to the length the one goes, the opposition or reaction of  
 10 the other should not be more violent. It is certain, for example, that no one makes such good resolutions as the sot and the gambler in their moments of repentance, or can be more impressed with the horrors of their situation ; — should this disposition, instead of a transient, idle pang, by chance become lasting,  
 15 who can be supposed to feel the beauty of temperance and economy more, or to look back with greater gratitude to their escape from the trammels of vice and passion ? Would the ingenious and elegant author of the SPECTATOR feel less regard  
 20 for the Scriptures, because they denounced in pointed terms the infirmity that “ most easily beset him,” that was the torment of his life, and the cause of his death ? Such reasoning would be true, if man was a simple animal or a logical machine, and all his faculties and impulses were in strict unison ; instead of which  
 25 they are eternally at variance, and no one hates or takes part against himself more heartily or heroically than does the same individual. Does he not pass sentence on his own conduct ? Is not his conscience both judge and accuser ? What else is the meaning of all our resolutions against ourselves, as well as of  
 30 our exhortations to others ? *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*, is not the language of hypocrisy, but of human nature.

The hypocrisy of priests has been a butt for ridicule in all ages ; but I am not sure that there has not been more wit than philosophy in it. A priest, it is true, is obliged to affect a greater

degree of sanctity than ordinary men, and probably more than he possesses; and this is so far, I am willing to allow, hypocrisy and solemn grimace. But I cannot admit, that though he may exaggerate, or even make an ostentatious display of religion and virtue through habit and spiritual pride, that this is a proof he has not these sentiments in his heart, or that his whole behaviour is the mere acting of a part. His character, his motives, are not altogether pure and sincere: are they therefore all false and hollow? No such thing. It is contrary to all our observation and experience so to interpret it. We all wear some disguise — make some professions — use some artifice to set ourselves off as being better than we are; and yet it is not denied that we have some good intentions and praiseworthy qualities at bottom, though we may endeavour to keep some others that we think less to our credit as much as possible in the background: — why then should we not extend the same favourable construction to monks and friars, who may be sometimes caught tripping as well as other men — with less excuse, no doubt; but if it is also with greater remorse of conscience, which probably often happens, their pretensions are not all downright, bare-faced imposture. Their sincerity, compared with that of other men, can only be judged of by the proportion between the degree of virtue they profess, and that which they practice, or at least carefully seek to realise. To conceive it otherwise, is to insist that characters must be all perfect, or all vicious — neither of which suppositions is even possible. If a clergyman is notoriously a drunkard, a debauchee, a glutton, or a scoffer, then for him to lay claim at the same time to extraordinary inspirations of faith or grace, is both scandalous and ridiculous. The scene between the Abbot and the poor brother in the “Duenna” is an admirable exposure of this double-faced dealing. But because a parson has a relish for the good things of this life, or what is commonly called *a liquorish tooth in his head*, (beyond what he would have it supposed by others, or even by himself,) that he has therefore

no fear or belief of the next, I hold for a crude and vulgar prejudice. If a poor half-starved parish priest pays his court to an *olla podrida*, or a venison pasty, with uncommon *gusto*, shall we say that he has no other sentiments in offering his devotions to  
 5 a crucifix, or in counting his beads? I see no more ground for such an inference, than for affirming that Handel was not in earnest when he sat down to compose a Symphony, because he had at the same time perhaps a bottle of cordials in his cupboard; or that Raphael was not entitled to the epithet of *divine*, because  
 10 he was attached to the Fornarina! Everything has its turn in this chequered scene of things, unless we prevent it from taking its turn by over-rigid conditions, or drive men to despair or the most callous effrontery, by erecting a standard of perfection, to which no one can conform in reality! Thomson, in his "Castle  
 15 of Indolence," (a subject on which his pen ran riot,) has indulged in rather a free description of "a little round, fat, oily man of God —

"Who shone all glistening with ungodly dew,  
 If a tight damsel chanced to trippen by;  
 20 Which, when observed, he shrunk into his mew,  
 And straight would recollect his piety anew."

Now, was the piety in this case the less real, because it had been forgotten for a moment? Or even if this motive should not prove the strongest in the end, would this therefore show that it was  
 25 none, which is necessary to the argument here combated, or to make out our little plump priest a very knave! A priest may be honest, and yet err; as a woman may be modest, and yet half-inclined to be a rake. So the virtue of prudes may be suspected, though not their sincerity. The strength of their passions may  
 30 make them more conscious of their weakness, and more cautious of exposing themselves; but not more to blind others than as a guard upon themselves. Again, suppose a clergyman hazards a jest upon sacred subjects, does it follow that he does not believe a word of the matter? Put the case that any one else,

encouraged by his example, takes up the banter or levity, and see what effect it will have upon the reverend divine. He will turn round like a serpent trod upon, with all the vehemence and asperity of the most bigoted orthodoxy. Is this dictatorial and exclusive spirit then put on merely as a mask and to browbeat 5 others? No; but he thinks he is privileged to trifle with the subject safely himself, from the store of evidence he has in reserve, and from the nature of his functions; but he is afraid of serious consequences being drawn from what others might say, or from his seeming to countenance it; and the moment the Church is in 10 danger, or his own faith brought in question, his attachment to each becomes as visible as his hatred to those who dare to impugn either the one or the other. A woman's attachment to her husband is not to be suspected, if she will allow no one to abuse him but herself! It has been remarked, that with the spread of 15 liberal opinions, or a more general scepticism on articles of faith, the clergy and religious persons in general have become more squeamish and jealous of any objections to their favourite doctrines: but this is what must follow in the natural course of things — the resistance being always in proportion to the danger; 20 and arguments and books that were formerly allowed to pass unheeded, because it was supposed impossible they could do any mischief, are now denounced or prohibited with the most zealous vigilance, from a knowledge of the contagious nature of their influence and contents. So in morals, it is obvious that the 25 greatest nicety of expression and allusion must be observed, where the manners are the most corrupt, and the imagination most easily excited, not out of mere affectation, but as a dictate of common sense and decency.

One of the finest remarks that has been made in modern 30 times, is that of Lord Shaftesbury, that there is no such thing as a perfect Theist, or an absolute Atheist; that whatever may be the general conviction entertained on the subject, the evidence is not and cannot be at all times equally present to the mind;

that even if it were, we are not in the same humour to receive it: a fit of the gout, a shower of rain shakes our best-established conclusions; and according to circumstances and the frame of mind we are in, our belief varies from the most sanguine enthusiasm to lukewarm indifference, or the most gloomy despair. There is a point of conceivable faith which might prevent any lapse from virtue, and reconcile all contrarieties between theory and practice; but this is not to be looked for in the ordinary course of nature, and is reserved for the abodes of the blest.

10 Here, "upon this bank and shoal of time," the utmost we can hope to attain is, a strong habitual belief in the excellence of virtue, or the dispensations of Providence; and the conflict of the passions, and their occasional mastery over us, far from disproving or destroying this general, rational conviction, often fling

15 us back more forcibly upon it, and like other infidelities and misunderstandings, produce all the alternate remorse and raptures of repentance and reconciliation.

It has been frequently remarked that the most obstinate heretic or confirmed sceptic, witnessing the service of the Roman

20 Catholic church, the elevation of the host amidst the sounds of music, the pomp of ceremonies, the embellishments of art, feels himself spell-bound; and is almost persuaded to become a renegade to his reason or his religion. Even in hearing a vespers chaunted on the stage, or in reading an account of a torch-light

25 procession in a romance, a superstitious awe creeps over the frame, and we are momentarily charmed out of ourselves. When such is the obvious and involuntary influence of circumstances on the imagination, shall we say that a monkish recluse surrounded from his childhood by all this pomp, a stranger to any

30 other faith, who has breathed no other atmosphere, and all whose meditations are bent on this one subject both by interest and habit and duty, is to be set down as a rank and heartless mountebank in the professions he makes of belief in it, because his thoughts may sometimes wander to forbidden subjects, or

his feet stumble on forbidden ground? Or shall not the deep shadows of the woods in Vallombrosa enhance the solemnity of this feeling, or the icy horrors of the Grand Chartreux add to its elevation and its purity? To argue otherwise is to misdeem of human nature, and to limit its capacities for good or evil by 5 some narrow-minded standard of our own. Man is neither a God nor a brute; but there is a prosaic and a poetical side to everything concerning him, and it is as impossible absolutely and for a constancy to exclude either one or the other from the mind, as to make him live without air or food. The *ideal*, the 10 empire of thought and aspiration after truth and good, is inseparable from the nature of an intellectual being — what right have we then to catch at every strife which in the mortified professors of religion the spirit wages with the flesh as grossly vicious, or at every doubt, the bare suggestion of which fills them 15 with consternation and despair, as a proof of the most glaring hypocrisy? The grossnesses of religion and its stickling for mere forms as its essence, have given a handle, and a just one, to its impugners. At the feast of Ramadan (says Voltaire) the Mussulmans wash and pray five times a day, and then fall to cutting 20 one another's throats again with the greatest deliberation and good-will. The two things, I grant, are sufficiently at variance; but they are, I contend, equally sincere in both. The Mahometans are savages, but they are not the less true believers — they hate their enemies as heartily as they revere the Koran. This, instead 25 of showing the fallacy of the *ideal* principle, shows its universality and indestructible essence. Let a man be as bad as he will, as little refined as possible, and indulge whatever hurtful passions or gross vices he thinks proper, these cannot occupy the whole of his time; and in the intervals between one scoundrel 30 action and another he may and must have better thoughts, and may have recourse to those of religion (true or false) among the number, without in this being guilty of hypocrisy or of making a jest of what is considered as sacred. This, I take it, is the

whole secret of Methodism, which is a sort of modern vent for the ebullitions of the spirit through the gaps of unrighteousness.

We often see that a person condemns in another the very thing he is guilty of himself. Is this hypocrisy? It may, or it  
5 may not. If he really feels none of the disgust and abhorrence he expresses, this is quackery and impudence. But if he really expresses what he feels, (and he easily may, for it is the abstract idea he contemplates in the case of another, and the immediate temptation to which he yields in his own, so that he probably is  
10 not even conscious of the identity or connexion between the two,) then this is not hypocrisy, but want of strength and keeping in the moral sense. All morality consists in squaring our actions and sentiments to our ideas of what is fit and proper; and it is the incessant struggle and alternate triumph of the two principles,  
15 the *ideal* and the physical, that keeps up this "mighty coil and pudder" about vice and virtue, and is one great source of all the good and evil in the world. The mind of man is like a clock that is always running down, and requires to be as constantly wound up. The *ideal* principle is the master-key that winds it  
20 up, and without which it would come to a stand: the sensual and selfish feelings are the dead weights that pull it down to the gross and grovelling. Till the intellectual faculty is destroyed, (so that the mind sees nothing beyond itself, or the present moment,) it is impossible to have all brutal depravity: till the  
25 material and physical are done away with, (so that it shall contemplate everything from a purely spiritual and disinterested point of view,) it is impossible to have all virtue. There must be a mixture of the two, as long as man is compounded of opposite materials, a contradiction and an eternal competition for  
30 the mastery. I by no means think a single bad action condemns a man, for he probably condemns it as much as you do; nor a single bad habit, for he is probably trying all his life to get rid of it. A man is only thoroughly profligate when he has lost the sense of right and wrong; or a thorough hypocrite, when he

has not even the wish to be what he appears. The greatest offence against virtue is to speak ill of it. To recommend certain things is worse than to practise them. There may be an excuse for the last in the frailty of passion; but the former can arise from nothing but an utter depravity of disposition. Any one 5 may yield to temptation, and yet feel a sincere love and aspiration after virtue: but he who maintains vice in theory, has not even the conception or capacity for virtue in his mind. Men err: fiends only make a mock at goodness.

We sometimes deceive ourselves, and think worse of human 10 nature than it deserves, in consequence of judging of character from names, and classes, and modes of life. No one is simply and absolutely any one thing, though he may be branded with it as a name. Some persons have expected to see his crimes written in the face of a murderer, and have been disappointed 15 because they did not, as if this impeached the distinction between virtue and vice. Not at all. The circumstance only showed that the man was other things, and had other feelings besides those of a murderer. If he had nothing else, — if he had fed on nothing else, — if he had dreamt of nothing else, but 20 schemes of murder, his features would have expressed nothing else: but this perfection in vice is not to be expected from the contradictory and mixed nature of our motives. Humanity is to be met with in a den of robbers; nay, modesty in a brothel. Even among the most abandoned of the other sex, there is not 25 unfrequently found to exist (contrary to all that is generally supposed) one strong and individual attachment, which remains unshaken to the last. Virtue may be said to steal, like a guilty thing, into the secret haunts of vice and infamy; it clings to their devoted victim, and will not be driven quite away. Noth- 30 ing can destroy the human heart. Again, there is a heroism in crime, as well as in virtue. Vice and infamy have also their altars and their religion. This makes nothing in their favour, but is a proof of the heroical disinterestedness of man's nature,

and that whatever he does, he must fling a dash of romance and sublimity into it; just as some grave biographer has said of Shakespeare, that "even when he killed a calf, he made a speech and did it in a great style."

- 5 It is then impossible to get rid of this original distinction and contradictory bias, and to reduce everything to the system of French levity and Epicurean indifference. Wherever there is a capacity of conceiving of things as different from what they are, there must be a principle of taste and selection — a disposition  
10 to make them better, and a power to make them worse. Ask a Parisian milliner if she does not think one bonnet more becoming than another — a Parisian dancing-master if French grace is not better than English awkwardness — a French cook if all sauces are alike — a French *blacklegs* if all throws are equal on  
15 the dice? It is curious that the French nation restrict rigid rules and fixed principles to cookery and the drama, and maintain that the great drama of human life is entirely a matter of caprice and fancy. No one will assert that Raphael's histories, that Claude's landscapes are not better than a daub: but if the  
20 expression in one of Raphael's faces is better than the most mean and vulgar, how resist the consequence that the feeling so expressed is better also? It does not appear to me that all faces or all actions are alike. If goodness were only a theory, it were a pity it should be lost to the world. There are a  
25 number of things, the idea of which is a clear gain to the mind. Let people, for instance, rail at friendship, genius, freedom, as long as they will — the very names of these despised qualities are better than anything else that could be substituted for them, and embalm even the most envenomed satire against  
30 them. It is no small consideration that the mind is capable even of feigning such things. So I would contend against that reasoning which would have it thought that if religion is not true, there is no difference between mankind and the beasts that perish; — I should say, that this distinction is equally proved, if

religion is supposed to be a mere fabrication of the human mind; the capacity to conceive it makes the difference. The idea alone of an over-ruling Providence, or of a future state, is as much a distinctive mark of a superiority of nature, as the invention of the mathematics, which are true, — or of poetry, 5 which is a fable. Whatever the truth or falsehood of our speculations, the power to make them is peculiar to ourselves.

The contrariety and warfare of different faculties and dispositions within us has not only given birth to the Manichean and Gnostic heresies, and to other superstitions of the East, but 10 will account for many of the mummeries and dogmas both of Popery and Calvinism, — confession, absolution, justification by faith, &c.; which, in the hopelessness of attaining perfection, and our dissatisfaction with ourselves for falling short of it, are all substitutes for actual virtue, and an attempt to throw the 15 burthen of a task, to which we are unequal or only half disposed, on the merits of others, or on outward forms, ceremonies, and professions of faith. Hence the crowd of

"Eremites and friars,  
White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery."

20

If we do not conform to the law, we at least acknowledge the jurisdiction of the court. A person does wrong; he is sorry for it; and as he still feels himself liable to error, he is desirous to make atonement as well as he can, by ablutions, by tithes, by penance, by sacrifices, or other voluntary demonstrations of 25 obedience, which are in his power, though his passions are not, and which prove that his will is not refractory, and that his understanding is right towards God. The stricter tenets of Calvinism, which allow of no medium between grace and reprobation, and doom man to eternal punishment for every breach 30 of the moral law, as an equal offence against infinite truth and justice, proceed (like the paradoxical doctrine of the Stoics) from taking a half-view of this subject, and considering man

as amenable only to the dictates of his understanding and his conscience, and not excusable from the temptations and frailty of human ignorance and passion. The mixing up of religion and morality together, or the making us accountable for every  
5 word, thought, or action, under no less a responsibility than our everlasting future welfare or misery, has also added incalculably to the difficulties of self-knowledge, has superinduced a violent and spurious state of feeling, and made it almost impossible to distinguish the boundaries between the true and false, in judging  
10 of human conduct and motives. A religious man is afraid of looking into the state of his soul, lest at the same time he should reveal it to Heaven; and tries to persuade himself that by shutting his eyes to his true character and feelings, they will remain a profound secret both here and hereafter. This is a strong  
15 engine and irresistible inducement to self-deception; and the more zealous any one is in his convictions of the truth of religion, the more we may suspect the sincerity of his pretensions to piety and morality.

Thus, though I think there is very little downright hypocrisy  
20 in the world, I do think there is a great deal of *cant* — “cant religious, cant political, cant literary,” &c., as Lord Byron said. Though few people have the face to set up for the very thing they in their hearts despise, we almost all want to be thought better than we are, and affect a greater admiration or abhorrence  
25 of certain things than we really feel. Indeed, some degree of affectation is as necessary to the mind as dress is to the body; we must overact our part in some measure, in order to produce any effect at all. There was formerly the two hours’ sermon, the long-winded grace, the nasal drawl, the uplifted hands and eyes;  
30 all which, though accompanied with some corresponding emotion, expressed more than was really felt, and were in fact intended to make up for the conscious deficiency. As our interest in anything wears out with time and habit, we exaggerate the outward symptoms of zeal as mechanical helps to devotion, dwell

the longer on our words as they are less felt, and hence the very origin of the term, *cant*. The cant of sentimentality has succeeded to that of religion. There is a cant of humanity, of patriotism and loyalty — not that people do not feel these emotions, but they make too great a *fuss* about them, and drawl 5 out the expression of them till they tire themselves and others. There is a cant about Shakespeare. There is a cant about *Political Economy* just now. In short, there is and must be a cant about everything that excites a considerable degree of attention and interest, and that people would be thought to 10 know and care rather more about than they actually do. Cant is the voluntary overcharging or prolongation of a real sentiment; hypocrisy is the setting up a pretension to a feeling you never had and have no wish for. Mr. Coleridge is made up of *cant*, that is, of mawkish affectation and sensibility; but he 15 has not sincerity enough to be a *hypocrite*, that is, he has not hearty dislike or contempt enough for anything, to give the lie to his puling professions of admiration and esteem for it. The fuss that Mr. Liberal Snake makes about Political Economy is not cant, but what Mr. Theodore Hook politely calls *humbug*; 20 he himself is hardly the dupe of his own pompous reasoning, but he wishes to make it the *stalking-horse* of his ambition or interest to sneak into a place and curry favour with the Government.

## A FAREWELL TO ESSAY-WRITING

"This life is best, if quiet life is best."

Food, warmth, sleep, and a book ; these are all I at present ask — the *ultima thule* of my wandering desires. Do you not then wish for

5 "A friend in your retreat,  
Whom you may whisper, solitude is sweet?"

Expected, well enough : — gone, still better. Such attractions are strengthened by distance. Nor a mistress? "Beautiful mask! I know thee!" When I can judge of the heart from the face, 10 of the thoughts from the lips, I may again trust myself. Instead of these, give me the robin red-breast, pecking the crumbs at the door, or warbling on the leafless spray, the same glancing form that has followed me wherever I have been, and "done its spirit-ing gently;" or the rich notes of the thrush that startle the ear 15 of winter, and seem to have drunk up the full draught of joy from the very sense of contrast. To these I adhere and am faithful, for they are true to me; and, dear in themselves, are dearer for the sake of what is departed, leading me back (by the hand) to that dreaming world, in the innocence of which they 20 sat and made sweet music, waking the promise of future years, and answered by the eager throbbings of my own breast. But now "the credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er," and I turn back from the world that has deceived me, to nature that lent it a false beauty, and that keeps up the illusion of the past. As 25 I quaff my libations of tea in a morning, I love to watch the clouds sailing from the west, and fancy that "the spring comes slowly up this way." In this hope, while "fields are dank and ways are mire," I follow the same direction to a neighbouring

wood, where, having gained the dry, level greensward, I can see my way for a mile before me, closed in on each side by copse-wood, and ending in a point of light more or less brilliant, as the day is bright or cloudy. What a walk is this to me! I have no need of book or companion — the days, the hours, the thoughts 5 of my youth are at my side, and blend with the air that fans my cheek. Here I can saunter for hours, bending my eye forward, stopping and turning to look back, thinking to strike off into some less trodden path, yet hesitating to quit the one I am in, afraid to snap the brittle threads of memory. I remark the shin- 10 ing trunks and slender branches of the birch trees, waving in the idle breeze; or a pheasant springs up on whirring wing; or I recall the spot where I once found a wood-pigeon at the foot of a tree, weltering in its gore, and think how many seasons have flown since "it left its little life in air." Dates, names, faces 15 come back — to what purpose? Or why think of them now? Or rather, why not think of them oftener? We walk through life, as through a narrow path, with a thin curtain drawn around it; behind are ranged rich portraits, airy harps are strung — yet we will not stretch forth our hands and lift aside the veil, to catch 20 glimpses of the one, or sweep the chords of the other. As in a theatre, when the old-fashioned green curtain drew up, groups of figures, fantastic dresses, laughing faces, rich banquets, stately columns, gleaming vistas appeared beyond; so we have only at any time to "peep through the blanket of the past," to possess 25 ourselves at once of all that has regaled our senses, that is stored up in our memory, that has struck our fancy, that has pierced our hearts: — yet to all this we are indifferent, insensible, and seem intent only on the present vexation, the future disappointment. If there is a Titian hanging up in the room with me, I 30 scarcely regard it: how then should I be expected to strain the mental eye so far, or to throw down, by the magic spells of the will, the stone-walls that enclose it in the Louvre? There is one head there of which I have often thought, when looking at it,

that nothing should ever disturb me again, and I would become the character it represents — such perfect calmness and self-possession reigns in it! Why do I not hang an image of this in some dusky corner of my brain, and turn an eye upon it ever  
 5 and anon, as I have need of some such talisman to calm my troubled thoughts? The attempt is fruitless, if not natural; or, like that of the French, to hang garlands on the grave, and to conjure back the dead by miniature pictures of them while living! It is only some actual coincidence, or local association that tends,  
 10 without violence, to “open all the cells where memory slept.” I can easily, by stooping over the long-sprent grass and clay-cold clod, recall the tufts of primroses, or purple hyacinths, that formerly grew on the same spot, and cover the bushes with leaves and singing-birds, as they were eighteen summers ago; or pro-  
 15 longing my walk and hearing the sighing gale rustle through a tall, strait wood at the end of it, can fancy that I distinguish the cry of hounds, and the fatal group issuing from it, as in the tale of Theodore and Honoria. A moaning gust of wind aids the belief; I look once more to see whether the trees before me  
 20 answer to the idea of the horror-stricken grove, and an air-built city towers over their grey tops.

“Of all the cities in Romanian lands,  
 The chief and most renown’d Ravenna stands.”

I return home resolved to read the entire poem through, and,  
 25 after dinner, drawing my chair to the fire, and holding a small print close to my eyes, launch into the full tide of Dryden’s couplets (a stream of sound), comparing his didactic and descriptive pomp with the simple pathos and picturesque truth of Boccaccio’s story, and tasting with a pleasure, which none but an  
 30 habitual reader can feel, some quaint examples of pronunciation in this accomplished versifier.

“Which when Honoria view’d,  
 The fresh *impulse* her former fright renew’d.”

*Theodore and Honoria*

"And made th' *insult*, which in his grief appears,  
The means to mourn thee with my pious tears."

*Sigismonda and Guiscardo*

These trifling instances of the wavering and unsettled state of the language give double effect to the firm and stately march of the verse, and make me dwell with a sort of tender interest 5 on the difficulties and doubts of an earlier period of literature. They pronounced words then in a manner which we should laugh at now; and they wrote verse in a manner which we can do anything but laugh at. The pride of a new acquisition seems to give fresh confidence to it; to impel the rolling syllables through 10 the moulds provided for them, and to overflow the envious bounds of rhyme into time-honoured triplets. I am much pleased with Leigh Hunt's mention of Moore's involuntary admiration of Dryden's free, unshackled verse, and of his repeating *con amore*, and with an Irish spirit and accent, the fine lines — 15

"Let honour and preferment go for gold,  
But glorious beauty is n't to be sold."

What sometimes surprises me in looking back to the past, is, with the exception already stated, to find myself so little changed in the time. The same images and trains of thought stick by 20 me: I have the same tastes, likings, sentiments, and wishes that I had then. One great ground of confidence and support has, indeed, been struck from under my feet; but I have made it up to myself by proportionable pertinacity of opinion. The success of the great cause, to which I had vowed myself, was 25 to me more than all the world: I had a strength in its strength, a resource which I knew not of, till it failed me for the second time.

"Fall'n was Glenartny's stately tree!  
Oh! ne'er to see Lord Ronald more!"

30

It was not till I saw the axe laid to the root, that I found the full extent of what I had to lose and suffer. But my conviction of the right was only established by the triumph of the wrong;

and my earliest hopes will be my last regrets. One source of this unbendingness, (which some may call obstinacy) is that, though living much alone, I have never worshipped the Echo. I see plainly enough that black is not white, that the grass is green, that kings are not their subjects ; and, in such self-evident cases, do not think it necessary to collate my opinions with the received prejudices. In subtler questions, and matters that admit of doubt, as I do not impose my opinion on others without a reason, so I will not give up mine to them without a better reason ; and a person calling me names, or giving himself airs of authority, does not convince me of his having taken more pains to find out the truth than I have, but the contrary. Mr. Gifford once said, that " while I was sitting over my gin and tobacco-pipes, I fancied myself a Leibnitz." He did not so much as know that I had ever read a metaphysical book : — was I therefore, out of complaisance or deference to him, to forget whether I had or not ? I am rather disappointed, both on my own account and his, that Mr. Hunt has missed the opportunity of explaining the character of a friend, as clearly as he might have done. He is puzzled to reconcile the shyness of my pretensions with the inveteracy and sturdiness of my principles. I should have thought they were nearly the same thing. Both from disposition and habit, I can *assume* nothing in word, look, or manner. I cannot steal a march upon public opinion in any way. My standing upright, speaking loud, entering a room gracefully, proves nothing ; therefore I neglect these ordinary means of recommending myself to the good graces and admiration of strangers, (and, as it appears, even of philosophers and friends). Why ? Because I have other resources, or, at least, am absorbed in other studies and pursuits. Suppose this absorption to be extreme, and even morbid — that I have brooded over an idea till it has become a kind of substance in my brain, that I have reasons for a thing which I have found out with much labour and pains, and to which I can scarcely do justice without

the utmost violence of exertion (and that only to a few persons) — is this a reason for my playing off my out-of-the-way notions in all companies, wearing a prim and self-complacent air, as if I were “the admired of all observers?” or is it not rather an argument, (together with a want of animal spirits), why I should 5 retire into myself, and perhaps acquire a nervous and uneasy look, from a consciousness of the disproportion between the interest and conviction I feel on certain subjects, and my ability to communicate what weighs upon my own mind to others? If my ideas, which I do not avouch, but suppose, lie below the 10 surface, why am I to be always attempting to dazzle superficial people with them, or smiling, delighted, at my own want of success?

What I have here stated is only the excess of the common and well-known English and scholastic character. I am neither 15 a buffoon, a fop, nor a Frenchman, which Mr. Hunt would have me to be. He finds it odd that I am a close reasoner and a loose dresser. I have been (among other follies) a hard liver as well as a hard thinker; and the consequences of that will not allow me to dress as I please. People in real life are not like 20 players on a stage, who put on a certain look or *costume*, merely for effect. I am aware, indeed, that the gay and airy pen of the author does not seriously probe the errors or misfortunes of his friends — he only glances at their seeming peculiarities, so as to make them odd and ridiculous; for which forbearance few of 25 them will thank him. Why does he assert that I was vain of my hair when it was black, and am equally vain of it now it is grey, when this is true in neither case? This transposition of motives makes me almost doubt whether Lord Byron was thinking so much of the rings on his fingers as his biographer was. These 30 sort of criticisms should be left to women. I am made to wear a little hat, stuck on the top of my head the wrong way. Nay, I commonly wear a large slouching hat over my eyebrows; and if ever I had another, I must have twisted it about in any shape

to get rid of the annoyance. This probably tickled Mr. Hunt's fancy, and retains possession of it, to the exclusion of the obvious truism, that I naturally wear "a melancholy hat."

I am charged with using strange gestures and contortions of  
5 features in argument, in order to "look energetic." One would rather suppose that the heat of the argument produced the extravagance of the gestures, as I am said to be calm at other times. It is like saying that a man in a passion clenches his teeth, not because he is, but in order to seem, angry. Why  
10 should everything be construed into air and affectation? With Hamlet, I may say, "I know not *seems*."

Again, my old friend and pleasant "Companion" remarks it, as an anomaly in my character, that I crawl about the Fives-Court like a cripple till I get the racket in my hand, when I  
15 start up as if I was possessed with a devil. I have then a motive for exertion; I lie by for difficulties and extreme cases. *Aut Cæsar aut nullus*. I have no notion of doing nothing with an air of importance, nor should I ever take a liking to the game of battledoor and shuttlecock. I have only seen by acci-  
20 dent a page of the unpublished Manuscript relating to the present subject, which I dare say is, on the whole, friendly and just, and which has been suppressed as being too favourable, considering certain prejudices against me.

In matters of taste and feeling, one proof that my conclusions  
25 have not been quite shallow or hasty, is the circumstance of their having been lasting. I have the same favourite books, pictures, passages that I ever had: I may therefore presume that they will last me my life — nay, I may indulge a hope that my thoughts will survive me. This continuity of impression is the  
30 only thing on which I pride myself. Even L——, whose relish on certain things is as keen and earnest as possible, takes a surfeit of admiration, and I should be afraid to ask about his select authors or particular friends, after a lapse of ten years. As to myself, any one knows where to have me. What I have

once made up my mind to, I abide by to the end of the chapter. One cause of my independence of opinion is, I believe, the liberty I give to others, or the very diffidence and distrust of making converts. I should be an excellent man on a jury: I might say little, but should starve "the other eleven obstinate 5 fellows" out. I remember Mr. Godwin writing to Mr. Wordsworth, that "his tragedy of Antonio could not fail of success." It was damned past all redemption. I said to Mr. Wordsworth that I thought this a natural consequence; for how could any one have a dramatic turn of mind who judged entirely of others 10 from himself? Mr. Godwin might be convinced of the excellence of his work; but how could he know that others would be convinced of it, unless by supposing that they were as wise as himself, and as infallible critics of dramatic poetry — so many Aristotles sitting in judgment on Euripides! This shows why 15 pride is connected with shyness and reserve; for the really proud have not so high an opinion of the generality as to suppose that they can understand them, or that there is any common measure between them. So Dryden exclaims of his opponents with bitter disdain —

20

"Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive."

I have not sought to make partisans, still less did I dream of making enemies; and have therefore kept my opinions myself, whether they were currently adopted or not. To get others to come into our ways of thinking, we must go over to theirs; and 25 it is necessary to follow, in order to lead. At the time I lived here formerly, I had no suspicion that I should ever become a voluminous writer; yet I had just the same confidence in my feelings before I had ventured to air them in public as I have now. Neither the outcry *for* or *against* moves me a jot: I do 30 not say that the one is not more agreeable than the other.

Not far from the spot where I write, I first read Chaucer's *Flower and Leaf*, and was charmed with that young beauty,

shrouded in her bower, and listening with ever-fresh delight to the repeated song of the nightingale close by her — the impression of the scene, the vernal landscape, the cool of the morning, the gushing notes of the songstress,

5           “ And ayen, methought she sung close by mine ear,”

is as vivid as if it had been of yesterday ; and nothing can persuade me that that is not a fine poem. I do not find this impression conveyed in Dryden's version, and therefore nothing can persuade me that that is as fine. I used to walk out at this  
10 time with Mr. and Miss L—— of an evening, to look at the Claude Lorraine skies over our heads, melting from azure into purple and gold, and to gather mushrooms, that sprung up at our feet, to throw into our hashed mutton at supper. I was at that time an enthusiastic admirer of Claude, and could dwell for  
15 ever on one or two of the finest prints from him hung round my little room ; the fleecy flocks, the bending trees, the winding streams, the groves, the nodding temples, the air-wove hills, and distant sunny vales ; and tried to translate them into their lovely living hues. People then told me that Wilson was much superior  
20 to Claude. I did not believe them. Their pictures have since been seen together at the British Institution, and all the world have come into my opinion. I have not, on that account, given it up. I will not compare our hashed mutton with Amelia's ; but it put us in mind of it, and led to a discussion, sharply  
25 seasoned and well sustained, till midnight, the result of which appeared some years after in the Edinburgh Review. Have I a better opinion of those criticisms on that account, or should I therefore maintain them with greater vehemence and tenaciousness ? Oh no ! Both rather with less, now that they are before  
30 the public, and it is for them to make their election.

It is in looking back to such scenes that I draw my best consolation for the future. Later impressions come and go, and serve to fill up the intervals ; but these are my standing resource,

my true classics. If I have had few real pleasures or advantages, my ideas, from their sinewy texture, have been to me in the nature of realities; and if I should not be able to add to the stock, I can live by husbanding the interest. As to my speculations, there is little to admire in them but my admiration of 5 others; and whether they have an echo in time to come or not, I have learned to set a grateful value on the past, and am content to wind up the account of what is personal only to myself and the immediate circle of objects in which I have moved, with an act of easy oblivion,

10

"And curtain close such scene from every future view.

## THE SICK CHAMBER

What a difference between this subject and my last — a "Free Admission!" Yet from the crowded theatre to the sick chamber, from the noise, the glare, the keen delight, to the loneliness, the darkness, the dulness, and the pain, there is but one step. A  
5 breath of air, an overhanging cloud, effects it; and though the transition is made in an instant, it seems as if it would last for ever. A sudden illness not only puts a stop to the career of our triumphs and agreeable sensations, but blots out and cancels all recollection of and desire for them. We lose the relish of  
10 enjoyment; we are effectually cured of our romance. Our bodies are confined to our beds; nor can our thoughts wantonly detach themselves and take the road to pleasure, but turn back with doubt and loathing at the faint evanescent phantom which has usurped its place. If the folding-doors of the imagination  
15 were thrown open or left a-jar, so that from the disordered couch where we lay, we could still hail the vista of the past or future, and see the gay and gorgeous visions floating at a distance, however denied to our embrace, the contrast, though mortifying, might have something soothing in it, the mock-splendour might be the greater for the actual gloom: but the  
20 misery is that we cannot conceive anything beyond or better than the present evil; we are shut up and spell-bound in that, the curtains of the mind are drawn close, we cannot escape from "the body of this death," our souls are conquered, dismayed,  
25 "cooped and cabined in," and thrown with the lumber of our corporeal frames in one corner of a neglected and solitary room. We hate ourselves and every thing else; nor does one ray of comfort "peep through the blanket of the dark" to give us

hope. How should we entertain the image of grace and beauty, when our bodies writhe with pain? To what purpose invoke the echo of some rich strain of music, when we ourselves can scarcely breathe? The very attempt is an impossibility. We give up the vain task of linking delight to agony, of urging tor- 5  
por into ecstasy, which makes the very heart sick. We feel the present pain, and an impatient longing to get rid of it. This were indeed "a consummation devoutly to be wished:" on this we are intent, in earnest, inexorable: all else is impertinence and folly; and could we but obtain *ease* (that Goddess of the 10  
infirm and suffering) at any price, we think we could forswear all other joy and all other sorrows. *Hoc erat in votis*. All other things but our disorder and its cure seem less than nothing and vanity. It assumes a palpable form; it becomes a demon, a spectre, an incubus hovering over and oppressing us: we grap- 15  
ple with it: it strikes its fangs into us, spreads its arms round us, infects us with its breath, glares upon us with its hideous aspect; we feel it take possession of every fibre and of every faculty; and we are at length so absorbed and fascinated by it, that we cannot divert our reflections from it for an instant, for 20  
all other things but pain (and that which we suffer most acutely), appear to have lost their pith and power to interest. They are turned to dust and stubble. This is the reason of the fine resolutions we sometimes form in such cases, and of the vast superiority of the sick bed to the pomps and thrones of the 25  
world. We easily renounce wine when we have nothing but the taste of physic in our mouths: the rich banquet tempts us not, when "our very gorge rises" within us: Love and Beauty fly from a bed twisted into a thousand folds by restless lassitude and tormenting cares: the nerve of pleasure is killed by the 30  
pains that shoot through the head or rack the limbs: and indigestion seizes you with its leaden grasp and giant force (down, Ambition!) — you shiver and tremble like a leaf in a fit of the ague. (Avarice, let go your palsied hold!) We then are in the

mood, without ghostly advice, to betake ourselves to the life of  
"hermit poor,"

"In pensive place obscure, —"

and should be glad to prevent the return of a fever raging in  
5 the blood by feeding on pulse, and slaking our thirst at the  
limpid brook. The sudden resolutions, however, or "vows  
made in pain as violent and void," are generally of short dura-  
tion: the excess and the sorrow for it are alike selfish; and  
those repentances which are the most loud and passionate are  
10 the surest to end speedily in a relapse; for both originate in  
the same cause, the being engrossed by the prevailing feeling  
(whatever it may be), and an utter incapacity to look beyond it.

"The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be:  
The Devil grew well, the Devil a monk was he!"

15 It is amazing how little effect physical suffering or local cir-  
cumstances have upon the mind, except while we are subject to  
their immediate influence. While the impression lasts, they are  
every thing: when it is gone, they are nothing. We toss and  
tumble about in a sick bed; we lie on our right side, we then  
20 change to the left; we stretch ourselves on our backs, we turn  
on our faces; we wrap ourselves up under the clothes to  
exclude the cold, we throw them off to escape the heat and  
suffocation; we grasp the pillow in agony, we fling ourselves  
out of bed, we walk up and down the room with hasty or feeble  
25 steps; we return to bed; we are worn out with fatigue and  
pain, yet can get no repose for the one, nor intermission for  
the other; we summon all our patience, or give vent to passion  
and petty rage: nothing avails; we seem wedded to our dis-  
ease, "like life and death in disproportion met;" we make new  
30 efforts, try new expedients, but nothing appears to shake it off,  
or promise relief from our grim foe: it infixes its sharp sting  
into us, or overpowers us by its sickly and stunning weight:  
every moment is as much as we can bear, and yet there seems

no end of our lengthening tortures ; we are ready to faint with exhaustion, or work ourselves up to frenzy : we "trouble deaf Heaven with our bootless prayers : " we think our last hour has come, or peevishly wish it were, to put an end to the scene ; we ask questions as to the origin of evil and the necessity of pain ; we "moralise our complaints into a thousand similes ; " we deny the use of medicine *in toto*, we have a full persuasion that all doctors are mad or knaves, that our object is to gain relief, and theirs (out of the perversity of human nature, or to seem wiser than we) to prevent it ; we catechise the apothecary, rail at the nurse, and cannot so much as conceive the possibility that this state of things should not last for ever ; we are even angry at those who would give us encouragement, as if they would make dupes or children of us ; we might seek a release by poison, a halter, or the sword, but we have not strength of mind enough — our nerves are too shaken — to attempt even this poor revenge — when a change comes, the spell falls off, and the next moment we forget all that has happened to us. No sooner does our disorder turn its back upon us than we laugh at it. The state we have been in, sounds like a dream, a fable ; health is the order of the day, strength is ours *de jure* and *de facto* ; and we discard all uncalled-for evidence to the contrary with a smile of contemptuous incredulity, just as we throw our physic-bottles out of the window ! I see (as I awake from a short, uneasy doze) a golden light shine through the white window-curtains on the opposite wall : — is it the dawn of a new day, or the departing light of evening ? I do not well know, for the opium "they have drugged my posset with " has made strange havoc with my brain, and I am uncertain whether time has stood still, or advanced, or gone backward. By "puzzling o'er the doubt," my attention is drawn a little out of myself to external objects ; and I consider whether it would not administer some relief to my monotonous languor, if I call up a vivid picture of an evening

sky I witnessed a short while before, the white fleecy clouds, the azure vault, the verdant fields, and balmy air. In vain! The wings of fancy refuse to mount from my bed-side. The air without has nothing in common with the closeness within; the clouds  
5 disappear, the sky is instantly overcast and black. I walk out in this scene soon after I recover; and with those favourite and well-known objects interposed, can no longer recall the tumbled pillow, the juleps or the labels, or the unwholesome dungeon in which I was before immured. What is contrary to our present  
10 sensations or settled habits, amalgamates indifferently with our belief: the imagination rules over imaginary themes; the senses and custom have a narrower sway, and admit but one guest at a time. It is hardly to be wondered at that we dread physical calamities so little beforehand: we think no more of them the  
15 moment after they have happened. *Out of sight, out of mind.* This will perhaps explain why all actual punishment has so little effect; it is a state contrary to nature, alien to the will. If it does not touch honour and conscience (and where these are not, how can it touch them?) it goes for nothing; and where these  
20 are, it rather sears and hardens them. The gyves, the cell, the meagre fare, the hard labour are abhorrent to the mind of the culprit on whom they are imposed, who carries the love of liberty or indulgence to licentiousness; and who throws the thought of them behind him (the moment he can evade the penalty,) with  
25 scorn and laughter,

“Like Samson his green wythes.”<sup>1</sup>

So, in travelling, we often meet with great fatigue and inconvenience from heat or cold, or other accidents, and resolve never to go a journey again; but we are ready to set off on a new

<sup>1</sup> The thoughts of a captive can no more get beyond his prison-walls than his limbs, unless they are busied in planning an escape; as, on the contrary, what prisoner, after effecting his escape, ever suffered them to return there, or took common precautions to prevent his own? We indulge our fancy more than we consult our interest. The sense of personal identity has almost as little influence in practice as it has foundation in theory.

excursion to-morrow. We remember the landscape, the change of scene, the romantic expectation, and think no more of the heat, the noise, and dust. The body forgets its grievances, till they recur ; but imagination, passion, pride, have a longer memory and quicker apprehensions. To the first the pleasure or 5 pain is nothing when once over ; to the last it is only then that they begin to exist. The line in Metastasio,

"The worst of every evil is the fear,"

is true only when applied to this latter sort. — It is curious that, on coming out of a sick-room, where one has been pent some 10 time, and grown weak and nervous, and looking at Nature for the first time, the objects that present themselves have a very questionable and spectral appearance, the people in the street resemble flies crawling about, and seem scarce half-alive. It is we who are just risen from a torpid and unwholesome state, 15 and who impart our imperfect feelings of existence, health, and motion to others. Or it may be that the violence and exertion of the pain we have gone through make common everyday objects seem unreal and unsubstantial. It is not till we have established ourselves in form in the sitting-room, wheeled round 20 the arm-chair to the fire (for this makes part of our re-introduction to the ordinary modes of being in all seasons,) felt our appetite return, and taken up a book, that we can be considered as at all restored to ourselves. And even then our first sensations are rather empirical than positive, as after sleep 25 we stretch out our hands to know whether we are awake. This is the time for reading. Books are then indeed "a world, both pure and good," into which we enter with all our hearts, after our revival from illness and respite from the tomb, as with the freshness and novelty of youth. They are not merely acceptable 30 as without too much exertion they pass the time and relieve *ennui* ; but from a certain suspension and deadening of the passions, and abstraction from worldly pursuits, they may be

said to bring back and be friendly to the guileless and enthusiastic tone of feeling with which we formerly read them. Sickness has weaned us *pro tempore* from contest and cabal; and we are fain to be docile and children again. All strong changes  
 5 in our present pursuits throw us back upon the past. This is the shortest and most complete emancipation from our late discomfiture. We wonder that any one who has read *The History of a Foundling* should labour under an indigestion, nor do we comprehend how a perusal of the *Faery Queen* should not ensure  
 10 the true believer an uninterrupted succession of halcyon days. Present objects bear a retrospective meaning, and point to "a foregone conclusion." Returning back to life with half-strung nerves and shattered strength, we seem as when we first entered it with uncertain purposes and faltering aims. The machine has  
 15 received a shock, and it moves on more tremulously than before, and not all at once in the beaten track. Startled at the approach of death, we are willing to get as far from it as we can by making a proxy of our former selves; and finding the precarious tenure by which we hold existence, and its last sands running  
 20 out, we gather up and make the most of the fragments that memory has stored up for us. Every thing is seen through a medium of reflection and contrast. We hear the sound of merry voices in the street; and this carries us back to the recollections of some country-town or village-group —

25                "We see the children sporting on the shore,  
                   And hear the mighty waters roaring evermore."

A cricket chirps on the hearth, and we are reminded of Christmas gambols long ago. The very cries in the street seem to be of a former date; and the dry toast eats very much as it did  
 30 — twenty years ago. A rose smells doubly sweet, after being stifled with tinctures and essences; and we enjoy the idea of a journey and an inn the more for having been bed-ridden. But a book is the secret and sure charm to bring all these implied

associations to a focus. I should prefer an old one, Mr. Lamb's favourite, the *Journey to Lisbon*; or the *Decameron*, if I could get it; but if a new one, let it be *Paul Clifford*. That book has the singular advantage of being written by a gentleman, and not about his own class. The characters he commemorates 5 are every moment at fault between life and death, hunger and a *forced loan* on the public; and therefore the interest they take in themselves, and which we take in them, has no cant or affectation in it, but is "lively, audible, and full of vent." A set of well-dressed gentlemen, picking their teeth with a graceful air 10 after dinner, and endeavouring to keep their cravats from the slightest discomposure, and saying the most insipid things in the most insipid manner, do not make *a scene*. Well, then, I have got the new paraphrase on the *Beggar's Opera*, am fairly embarked in it; and at the end of the first volume, where I am 15 galloping across the heath with the three highwaymen, while the moon is shining full upon them, feel my nerves so braced, and my spirits so exhilarated, that, to say truth, I am scarce sorry for the occasion that has thrown me upon the work and the author — have quite forgot my *Sick Room* and am more 20 than half ready to recant the doctrine that a *Free-Admission* to the theatre is

—— "The true pathos and sublime  
Of human life : " ——

for I feel as I read that if the stage shows us the masks of 25 men and the pageant of the world, books let us into their souls and lay open to us the secrets of our own. They are the first and last, the most home-felt, the most heart-felt of all our enjoyments.



## NOTES

The only complete edition of Hazlitt's writings is by Waller and Glover in thirteen volumes, including one volume which contains a full index to subjects and quotations. References in these notes to "Works" are always to this edition. The instances of my indebtedness to this edition are too numerous to mention. Hazlitt's habit of quoting from memory has baffled every editor who has tried to discover the sources of the quotations. Though scholars have been able to discover most of those used in this volume, a few have eluded the most careful search of many editors.

### HAMLET

The only criticism of Hamlet by Hazlitt is the review of Kean's playing, which appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, March 14, 1814. The present issue is printed from the first edition of the "Characters of Shakespear" (1817), which is a reprint, usually with small changes, of the theatrical reviews appearing immediately after the performance of the plays.

In his preface to the published volume, "Characters of Shakespear," Hazlitt says: "The only work which seemed to supersede the necessity of an attempt like the present was Schlegel's very admirable 'Lectures on the Drama,' which give by far the best account of the plays of Shakspeare that has hitherto appeared. The only circumstances in which it was thought not impossible to improve on the manner in which the German critic has executed this part of his design, were in avoiding an appearance of mysticism in his style, not very attractive to the English reader, and in bringing illustrations from particular passages of the plays themselves, of which Schlegel's work, from the extensiveness of his plan, did not admit. We will at the same time confess, that some little jealousy of the character of the national understanding was not without its share in producing the following undertaking, for 'we were piqued' that it should be reserved for a foreign critic to give 'reasons for the faith which we English have in Shakespear.'" Then Hazlitt printed a long passage from Schlegel and contrasted his estimate of Shakspeare with that of Samuel Johnson, much to the disadvantage of the latter.

- 1 3 that famous soliloquy : III, i, 56.
- 1 4 the advice to the players : III, ii.
- 1 4 "this goodly frame" : II, ii, 310.
- 1 7 "man delighted not" : II, ii, 321.
- 1 9 grave-diggers : V, i.
- 1 23 "too much i' th' sun" : I, ii, 67.
- 2 2 "the pangs of despised love" : III, i, 72.
- 3 10 "we have that within" : I, ii, 85.
- 3 27 where he kills Polonius : III, iv.
- 3 28 alters the letters : IV, vi; V, ii, 51.
- 3 33 refuses to kill : III, iv; also "He kneels and prays."
- 4 21 "How all occasions" : IV, iv, 32.

5 33 the *Whole Duty of Man* was a treatise published in 1659. The author is unknown. It was very popular, one impression of 1717 appearing with the alluring title "The *Whole Duty of Man*, consider'd under its three principal and general divisions, namely The Duties we owe to God, Ourselves and Neighbors, Faithfully extracted from that excellent book so entitled and published for the benefit of the poorer sort." The book has been attributed to Robert Nelson, Esq., to Robert Norton, Henry Hammond, and others. It will be remembered as one of that interesting collection of books of Lydia Languish, in Sheridan's "Rivals," I, 2.

5 33 *Academy of Compliments* or the *Whole Art of Courtship*, being the nearest and most exact way of wooing a Maid or Widow, by the way of Dialogue or Complimental Expressions. London (no date). There were editions in 1640, 1650.

- 6 21 "I loved Ophelia" : V, i, 292.
- 6 26 "Sweets to the sweet" : V, i, 266.
- 7 13 his advice to Laertes : I, iii.
- 7 14 advice to the King : II, ii.

7 28 *Kemble*: John Philip Kemble (1757-1823), the celebrated English tragedian, son of Roger Kemble, brother of Charles Kemble and of Mrs. Sarah Kemble Siddons. He made his *début* as Hamlet at Drury Lane in 1783 and retired as Coriolanus, June 23, 1817. As manager of Drury Lane and later of Covent Garden he won a reputation, particularly at the opening of the new Covent Garden Theater when the "old price riots" occurred. Kemble was popular as Hamlet, Cato, and Brutus, but especially as Coriolanus. Hazlitt described with feeling and with regret Kemble's retirement from the stage in the *Times* for June 25, 1817. For many criticisms of his acting, see *Works*, Vol. VIII.

- 7 note "There is a willow" : IV, vii, 167.

**8 6 Kean:** Edmund Kean (1787-1833), a celebrated English actor. He first appeared at the Haymarket Theater in 1806, later at Drury Lane, where he scored a phenomenal success as Shylock. His initial appearance in New York was on November 29, 1820. Kean was one of the objects of Hazlitt's sincere and constant admiration. The parts which he played with exceptional brilliancy, such as Shylock, Lear, Hamlet, Othello, Iago, Macbeth, Romeo, Sir Giles Overreach, have been described vividly and sympathetically by Hazlitt in "View of the English Stage," Works, VIII, 179 ff.

### ON THE PERIODICAL ESSAYISTS

This was the fifth lecture of the series at the Surrey Institution. It was published in 1819. See Introduction, p. xxxi.

**9 "proper study of mankind":** Pope, "Essay on Man," Epistle II, l. 2.

**9 7 "comes home to the business":** "I do not publish my Essays, which of all my other works have been most current; for that, as it seems, they come home to men's business and bosoms" (from the "Dedication to the Duke of Buckingham," by Francis Bacon).

**9 7 *Quicquid agunt*:** Juvenal, "Satires," I, 85-86. This was also the motto of the first forty numbers of the "Tatler." It was translated thus by Hazlitt: "Whatever things are doing shall *germ* the motley subject of my page."

**9 16 "holds the mirror up to nature":** "Hamlet," III, ii, 24.

**9 23 "The act and practic part of life":** "Henry V," I, i, 51.

**10 6 "the web of our life":** "All's Well," IV, iii, 79. This was a favorite passage with Hazlitt and was often used by him.

**10 16 "Quid sit":** Horace, "Epistles," I, ii, 3, 4. "It tells what is honourable, what is loose, what is expedient, what not, more amply and better than Chrysippus and Grantor."

**10 22 Montaigne** (Michael de Montaigne, 1533-1592): His "Essais" were published in 1580-1588. Charles Cotton's translation (mentioned on page 13) was published in three volumes in 1685 and has been often reprinted, once by W. C. Hazlitt (1902). Florio's translation (published in 1601) was known to Shakspeare and to Bacon.

**11 31 "pour out all as plain":** Pope, "Imitation of the Second Book of the Satires of Horace," Sat. I, 51-52.

"I love to pour out all myself, as plain  
As downright Shippen, or as old Montaigne."

**11 32 Shippen** (1673-1743): William Shippen was an outspoken politician and a Jacobite, who was sent to the Tower in 1718. He used to

say of himself and Sir Robert Walpole: "Robin and I are two honest men, though he is for King George and I for King James." Of him, Hazlitt in his "British Senate" writes: "He was one of the most vehement and vigorous opposers of the measures of government through the whole of this reign. . . . But he was a man of great firmness and independence of mind."

12 23 "**Pereant isti**": "confound the fellows who have said our good things before us" (Hazlitt).

12 note **Mandeville**: Bernard de Mandeville (1670-1733); in 1705 he published a rough poem in octosyllabics, entitled "The Grumbling Iiive." This was reprinted in 1714 together with a long commentary in prose, with the title "The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Public Benefits."

13 3 Lord **Halifax**: George Savile, Marquis of Halifax (1633-1695); he has been sometimes called the founder of the political pamphlet. His style was simple and full of wit. His collected pamphlets appeared in 1700 and are interesting.

13 7 Cowley: Abraham Cowley (1618-1667), a royalist poet and one of the first writers of the English essay.

13 8 Sir **William Temple** (1628-1699): distinguished statesman and prose writer. He was for a time a patron of Swift.

13 9 Lord **Shaftesbury**: Antony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713); he published a book which became very famous and had much influence on the thought of the eighteenth century, "Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times" (1711). He was eminent as a philosophical essayist. He was opposed to Hobbes and maintained the existence of a moral sense.

13 note "**Nam quodcunque**" &c.: Lucretius, III, 752.

14 6 the **Tatler**: this famous paper, instituted by Richard Steele, continued from April 12, 1709, to January 2, 1711. In all there were 271 numbers, of which Steele contributed 188. See the editions of Steele and Addison in the Athenæum Press Series. See also the edition of the "Tatler" by G. A. Aitken (1889).

14 7 **Spectator** continued from March 1, 1711, to December 6, 1712, and from June 18, 1714, to December 20, 1714. The larger number of papers were written by Addison.

14 12 "the perfect spy o' th' time": "Macbeth," III, i, 129.

14 18 The first of these papers: a large part of this passage had appeared in the *Examiner* (March 5, 1815). It was then reprinted in "The Round Table" (1817) and was later included in the essay before us.

**14 26 Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.:** in starting the "Tatler," Steele assumed the name of the astrologer, Isaac Bickerstaff, rendered famous by Swift, who professed that Bickerstaff was a true astrologer, disgusted at the lies told by impostors. See Swift's "Predictions for the Year, 1708."

**14 32 Temple Bar:** the famous gateway before the Temple in London, which formerly divided Fleet Street from the Strand.

**15 9 he dwells with a secret satisfaction:** "Tatler," No. 107, December 14, 1709.

**15 14 The club at the Trumpet:** "Tatler," No. 132, where the club is described.

The Trumpet stood about half-way up Shire Lane, between Temple Bar and Carey Street, at the widest and best part of the lane, and remained almost entirely in its original state until demolished to make way for the new Law Courts. It had the old sign of the Trumpet to the last, as it figured in Limbard's "Mirror" in a picture where it is placed side by side with a view of the house in Fulwood's Rents where papers for the "Spectator" were taken in.

Aitken's edition of "Tatler," III, 98-99.

**15 16 cavalcade of the justice, &c.:** "Tatler," No. 86, October 26, 1709.

**15 20 the upholsterer and his companions:** "Tatler," Nos. 155, 160, 178. The original of this political upholsterer was said to have been Edward Arne of Covent Garden.

**15 21 Green Park:** a large park in London between Buckingham Palace and Piccadilly. It was especially popular in the eighteenth century.

**15 28 burlesque copy of verses:** "Tatler," No. 238, October 16, 1710. Swift writes (Journal, October 10, 1710): "I am now writing my poetical description of a 'Shower in London' and will send it to the 'Tatler.'"

**15 31 the Grecian coffee-house:** probably the most ancient of the coffee-houses. It goes back to about 1652. It stood in Devereux Court and had its name from a Greek, Constantine, who kept it.

In the "Tatler" announcements of all accounts of learning were "to be under the title of the Grecian"; see also "Tatler," No. 6. "While other parts of the town are amused with the present actions [of the Duke of Marlborough] we generally spend the evening at this table [the Grecian] in inquiry into antiquity, and think anything new which gives us new knowledge." In Dr. King's "Anecdotes" there is a story of two gentlemen friends who disputed there "about the account of a Greek word to such a length that they went out into Devereux Court and drew swords, when one of them was killed on the spot."

**15 32 Wills'**: the coffee-house on the north side of Russell Street, Covent Garden, at the end of Bow Street. It was named for its first proprietor, William Urwin. In the seventeenth century it became the chief resort of the poets and came to be known as the *wits'* coffee-house. See Pepys's "Diary," February, 1663-1664.

**16 7 Mr. Lilly**: for "Spectator," No. 138, August 8, 1711, Steele wrote the following advertisement: "The exercise of the snuff-box according to the most fashionable airs and notions, in opposition to the exercise of the fan, will be taught with the best plain or perfumed snuff at Charles Lillie's, perfumer, at the Corner of Beaufort Buildings in the Strand."

**16 8 Betterton**: Thomas Betterton (1635-1710), famous as actor and theater manager. He is often mentioned in the "Tatler," e.g. Nos. 1, 71, 167. See Aitken's edition, II, 163-164.

**16 8 Mrs. Oldfield**: Anne Oldfield (1683-1730), a celebrated actress. According to tradition, Farquhar, the dramatist, heard her in the Mitre Tavern reciting passages from Beaumont and Fletcher's plays. He spoke favorably of her to Vanbrugh, who in turn presented her to Christopher Rich, manager of Drury Lane.

**16 9 Will Estcourt**: Richard Estcourt (1668-1712), actor and dramatist. See "Spectator," No. 468, August 27, 1712.

**16 10 Tom Durfey**: Thomas D'Urfey (1653-1723), dramatist and song writer, often referred to in the "Tatler," e.g. Nos. 1, 11, 43, &c. He wrote "The Modern Prophets," which was produced in 1709. At his death he left his watch and chain to Steele, who wore it at the funeral.

**16 11 Duke of Marlborough**: John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722), the distinguished general in the War of the Spanish Succession. Thackeray has given a vivid, perhaps not a fair, picture of him in "Henry Esmond."

**16 11 Marshal Turenne** (1611-1675): created Marshal-General of the armies of France in 1660; he won many brilliant victories.

**16 12 Vanbrugh**: Sir John Vanbrugh (1664 or 1666-1726), a prominent dramatist and architect of the time of the Restoration. One of his most famous buildings was Blenheim near Oxford, given by the Crown to the Duke of Marlborough.

**16 27 "The first sprightly runnings"**: Dryden, "Aurengzebe," IV, 1:

And from the dregs of life think to receive,  
What the first sprightly running could not give.

**17 18 amiable weaknesses**: "Spectator," No. 100, June 25, 1711.

**17 18 hospitality**: "Spectator," Nos. 106, 107, July 2, 3, 1711.

17 21 passion for his fair enemy : "Spectator," No. 113, July 10, 1711.  
 17 25 the havoc he makes among the game : "Spectator," No. 116, July 13, 1711.

17 26 speech from the bench : "Spectator," No. 122, July 20, 1711.

17 28 put up as a sign-post : *ibid.*

17 30 baggage of a gipsy : "Spectator," No. 120, July 30, 1711.

17 32 witchcraft : "Spectator," No. 117, July 14, 1711.

17 33 account of the family pictures : "Spectator," No. 109, July 5, 1711.

17 34 to his falling asleep at church : "Spectator," No. 112, July 9, 1711. John Williams should be John Matthews. "I was yesterday very much surprised to hear my old Friend in the midst of the Service calling out to one *John Matthews* to mind what he was about and not disturb the Congregation."

18 2 Will. Wimble : "Spectator," Nos. 108, 119, 126, 131.

18 2 Will. Honeycomb : "Spectator," Nos. 105, 131, 151, 156.

18 21 the Court of Honour : "Tatler," No. 250, November 13, 1710.

18 22 Personification of Musical Instruments : "Spectator," Nos. 153, 157.

18 24 the family of an old college acquaintance : "Tatler," No. 95.

18 29 Guy of Warwick : an English metrical romance, perhaps of Saxon origin, known to have existed in French as early as the thirteenth century.

18 29 Seven Champions : a fantastic narrative of the seven saints of seven countries—St. George for England, St. Denis for France, St. James for Spain, St. Anthony for Italy, St. Andrew for Scotland, St. Patrick for Ireland, St. David for Wales. See W. H. Schofield, "English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer," p. 318.

18 31 account of the two sisters : "Tatler," No. 104, December 7, 1709.

18 33 that of the married lady : "Tatler," No. 82, October 17, 1709.

19 7 the lover and his mistress : "Tatler," No. 94, November 14, 1709.

19 9 the story of Mr. Eustace : "Tatler," No. 172, May 15, 1710.

19 10 the fine dream : "Tatler," No. 117, January 6, 1710.

19 20 Westminster Abbey : "Spectator," No. 26, March 30, 1710.

19 20 Royal Exchange : "Spectator," No. 69, May 19, 1710.

19 27 Cartoons of Raphael : "Spectator," No. 226, November 19, 1711. The "cartoons" were prepared by Raphael for the tapestries of the Sistine Chapel at Rome. They are now in the Kensington Museum, London.

19 28 Mr. Fuseli : Henry Fuseli (1741–1825), Swiss-English painter and art critic. He established himself in England in 1779, and in 1799 was elected professor of painting in the Royal Academy.

**20 5** original copy of the quarto edition of the *Tatler*: the "*Tatler*" was reissued in 8vo, and in 12mo in 1710-1711.

**20 8** Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727): the greatest of natural philosophers.

**20 10** *Herald's College*: College of Arms, an ancient royal corporation instituted by Richard III in 1483. "Behind Little Knight-Rider Street, to the east of Doctors' Commons, is the Herald's College" (Leigh Hunt, "*The Town*," chap. ii. This book contains an interesting account of the place).

**20 12** *The Guardian*: continued from March 12, 1713, to October 1, 1713. Of the 176 numbers Steele wrote 82 and Addison 53.

**20 16** the *Rambler*: a series of papers in imitation of the "*Spectator*," appearing every Tuesday and Saturday from March 20, 1750, to March 14, 1752. All the papers except five were written by Samuel Johnson.

**22 17** "*The elephant*": "*Paradise Lost*," IV, 345.

**23 10** "*If he were to write a fable*": "*Boswell*" (edited by Hill), II, 231.

**24 7** *Rasselas* (1759): Johnson's most popular work. It is the story of the wanderings of the Prince of Abyssinia in search of happiness.

**24 12** *patronised Lauder*: "*Boswell*," II, 228-231:

The Rev. Dr. Douglas, having, with uncommon acuteness, clearly detected a gross forgery and imposition upon the public by William Lauder, a Scotch schoolmaster, who had with equal impudence and ingenuity represented Milton as a plagiarist from certain modern Latin poets, Johnson, who had been so far imposed upon as to furnish a Preface and a Postscript to his work, now dictated a letter for Lauder, addressed to Dr. Douglas, acknowledging his fraud in terms of suitable contrition. Lauder afterwards went to the Barbadoes, where he died very miserably about the year 1771.

**24 20** "*the king of good fellows*":

There's auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen  
He's the King of gude fellows and wale [pick] of auld men.

Burns, "*Auld Rob Morris*," l. 2

**24 28** "*the Ebro's temper*": no one seems to understand where Hazlitt secured this expression. Mr. Gollancz, in his edition of Hazlitt's "*Wit and Humour*," asks the question whether this may be a very inaccurate misquoting of the line in "*Othello*," V, ii, 252:

It is a sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper.

**25 1** "*Does he wind into a subject*": "*Boswell*," II, 260.

**25 3** "*If that fellow*": Burke. *Ibid.* II, 450.

**25 6** *Topham Beauclerc and Langton*: *ibid.* I, 250.

25 20 Now I think I am a good-humoured fellow : *ibid.* II, 362.

25 22 his quitting the society of Garrick : *ibid.* I, 201.

25 23 dining with Wilkes : *ibid.* III, 64.

25 24 sitting with the young ladies : *ibid.* II, 120.

25 27 his carrying the unfortunate victim : Sergeant Talfourd, in his account of the lectures by Hazlitt, wrote :

The comparative insensibility of the bulk of his audience to his finest passages sometimes provoked him to awaken their attention by points which broke the train of his discourse, after which he could make himself amends by some abrupt paradox which might set their prejudices on edge, and make them fancy they were shocked. . . . He once had an edifying advantage over them. He was enumerating the humanities which endeared Dr. Johnson to his mind, and, at the close of an agreeable catalogue, mentioned, as last and noblest, "his carrying the poor victim of disease and dissipation on his back through Fleet Street," at which a titter arose from some, who were struck by the picture as ludicrous, and a murmur from others, who deemed the allusion unfit for ears polite. He paused for an instant, and then added in his steadiest and most impressive manner, "an act which realizes the parable of the Good Samaritan," at which his moral and delicate hearers shrank rebuked into deep silence.

"Literary Remains of William Hazlitt," pp. cxxviii-cxxix

26 7 "where they in trembling hope repose" : Gray's "Elegy, The Epitaph."

26 13 *The Adventurer* : November 7, 1752, to March 9, 1754, by John Hawkesworth (1715-1773).

26 16 *The World* : January 4, 1752, to March 9, 1754, by Edward Moore (1712-1757) in collaboration with Lyttleton, Chesterfield, and Horace Walpole.

26 17 *Connoisseur* : January 31, 1754, to September 30, 1756; begun by George Colman and Bonnell Thornton. It contained William Cowper's first poetry. The statement, "in the last of these there is one good idea," refers to a paper by Moore in the *World*, No. 176.

26 23 *Citizen of the World* (1762): the title given to a collection of papers first published as "Chinese Letters."

26 24 "go about to cozen reputation" : "Merchant of Venice," II, ix, 37 :

for who shall go about  
To cozen fortune and be honourable  
Without the stamp of merit?

26 27 *Persian Letters* (1735) : "Letters from a Persian in England to his friend at Ispahan," by Lord Lyttleton (1709-1773).

27 4 "The bonzes and priests" : "Citizen of the World," Letter X.

27 21 We are positive when we say : *ibid.* Letter V.

27 25 Beau Tibbs : *ibid.* Letters XXIX, LIV, LV, LXXI.

27 29 **Lounger**: *Edinburgh*, January 23, 1779, to May 27, 1780.

27 30 **Mirror**: *Edinburgh*, February 5, 1785, to January 6, 1786. Henry Mackenzie (1745-1831) was the chief contributor to both.

27 32 **La Roche**: in the *Mirror*, Nos. 42, 43, 44.

27 33 **Le Fevre**: Le Fever in Sterne's "Tristram Shandy," VI, 6.

28 1-4 **Man of the World** (1773), **Julia de Roubigné** (1777), **Man of Feeling** (1771): all by Henry Mackenzie.

28 4 **Rosamond Gray**: romance by Charles Lamb in 1798.

### CHARACTER OF MR. BURKE

This essay appeared originally as a part of the paper, "Coleridge's Literary Life," *Edinburgh Review*, XXVIII, 503, August, 1817. It appeared on the fifth of the following October in the *Champion* under the title "Character of Mr. Burke." In 1819 it was published in the volume, "Political Essays, with Sketches of Public Characters." The text of 1819 is here reprinted.

**Edmund Burke** (1729-1797): the celebrated English orator and statesman. Hazlitt's relation to Burke is interesting as well as very characteristic. When he was eighteen years of age (1796), he found on one of his rambles a copy of *St. James's Chronicle*, which contained a long extract from Burke's famous "Letter to a Noble Lord." It was the first time that Hazlitt had read a line of Burke's. To find such wonderful language, such splendid imagination, appealed inexpressibly to the young reader, but at the same time filled him with despair that he should find so difficult the task of conveying to others the slightest conception of his meaning. Later he picked up in a Shrewsbury bookshop Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France" (1790) and wrote of it with enthusiasm. Throughout his life he retained a sincere admiration for Burke's writings, but roundly criticized his position on public questions and decried him as an enemy of the people. See also another paper, Works, III, 325.

The views expressed in this essay should be compared with the admirable short biography of Burke by Lord Morley in the English Men of Letters Series.

32 18 **speech on the Begum's affairs**: on Burke's attitude toward Indian affairs and Warren Hastings, see Morley, chap. vii.

32 28 the word **abdication**: "the second claim of the Revolution Society is a 'right of cashiering their governors for misconduct.' Perhaps the apprehensions our ancestors entertained of forming such a precedent as that 'of cashiering for misconduct' was the cause that the declaration

of the act, which implied the abdication of King James, was, if it had any fault, rather too guarded and too circumstantial" (Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France" (edited by Payne), II, 31).

**33 3 Salvator Rosa** (1615-1673): a celebrated Neapolitan painter. It is said that he learned from the Italian banditti many incidents which he afterwards painted. He is thought to have been a member of a company formed for the purpose of waylaying and killing Spaniards.

**34 7 "Never so sure"**: Pope, "Moral Essays," II, 51. On his speeches on the American War, see Morley, chaps. iv, viii, ix.

### ON POETRY IN GENERAL

This was introductory to the series, "Lectures on the English Poets," delivered at the Surrey Institution and published the same year (1818). The present text is a reprint of the second edition (1819).

**35 24 "spreads its sweet leaves"**: "Romeo and Juliet," I, i, 138.

**36 8 "the stuff of which"**: "Tempest," IV, i, 156.

**36 9 "mere oblivion"**: "As You Like It," II, vii, 165.

**36 14 "man's life is poor as beast's"**: "King Lear," II, iv, 263.

**36 17 Molière**: the stage name of Jean Baptiste Poquelin (1622-1673), the greatest writer of French comedies. "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" (1670) was one of the most popular of Molière's plays, "a lesson of good sense to those who suffer from the social ambition to rise above their proper rank."

**36 23 the Lord-Mayor's show**: for an account of this interesting annual London carnival, see F. W. Fairholt's "Lord Mayor's Pageants," or the short sketch by Eric Brood, "The Lord Mayor's Show," 1896.

**37 1 "the lunatic, the lover"**: "Midsummer Night's Dream," V, i, 7 ff. It will be observed that Hazlitt has here, as usually, trusted to his not very accurate memory.

**37 16 Ariosto**: Lodovico Ariosto (1474-1533), the celebrated Italian poet, author of "Orlando Furioso." He began to write his great poem about 1503, and published it in 1516 in forty cantos (extended afterwards to forty-six). Up to the moment of his death he never ceased to correct and improve both the subject and the style. The first complete edition of the poem was published at Ferrara in 1532.

**37 19 Achilles**: the central figure in the Iliad of Homer, which chiefly tells of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, leader of the Greek warriors. "In Achilles, Homer summed up and fixed forever the ideal of the Greek character" (Symonds, "Studies of the Greek Poets," I, 20).

37 20 Plato: "The Republic," Book X.

37 32 "which ecstasy is very cunning in": "Hamlet," III, iv, 138.

38 19 Lord Bacon: "The Advancement of Learning," Book II, chap. iv, sect. 2 ff.

39 1 "Our eyes are made the fools": "Macbeth," II, i, 44.

39 3 "That if it would": "A Midsummer Night's Dream," V, i, 19 ff.

39 8 "The flame o' th' taper": "Cymbeline," II, ii, 19.

39 26 "for they are old like him": "King Lear," II, iv, 291.

40 11 When Lear says of Edgar: *ibid.* III, iv, 68.

40 18 "The little dogs and all": "King Lear," III, vi, 60.

40 25 "So I am": "King Lear," IV, vii, 70.

40 31 "Oh now, for ever": "Othello," III, iii, 347 ff.

41 10 "Never, Iago": *ibid.* III, iii, 453 ff.

41 20 "But there where I have garner'd": *ibid.* IV, ii, 57.

42 8 tragedies of Moore and Lillo: Edward Moore (1712-1757), dramatist and writer of fables. He was the author of "The Gamester" (1753), supposed to be the strongest lesson against gambling ever preached from stage or pulpit. With Lyttleton, Chesterfield, and Horace Walpole, Moore edited the *World* from 1753 to 1757. George Lillo (1693-1739) was also a dramatist. He wrote seven plays in the line of what was known as the "domestic drama." The influence of his most popular play, "The London Merchant or The History of George Barnwell" (1731), was considerable.

42 18 As Mr. Burke observes: "Sublime and Beautiful," Part I, sect. xv:

Choose a day on which to represent the most sublime and affecting tragedy we have; appoint the most favourite actors; spare no cost upon the scenes and decorations; unite the greatest efforts of poetry, painting, and music; and when you have collected your audience, just at the moment when their minds are erect with expectation, let it be reported that a state criminal of high rank is on the point of being executed in the adjoining square; in a moment the emptiness of the theatre would demonstrate the comparative weakness of the imitative arts, and proclaim the triumph of the real sympathy.

43 8 "Masterless passion": "Merchant of Venice," IV, i, 50-51. In Shakspeare the lines are:

for affection,  
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood  
Of what it likes or loathes.

43 27 "Now night descending": Pope, "Dunciad," I, 89-90.

43 30 "Throw him on the steep": Collins, "Ode to Fear," ll. 14-15.

43 33 "Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted": "King Lear," I, iv, 250:

Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,  
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child  
Than the sea-monster.

45 33 **Jacob's Dream**: see Genesis xxxv, 9-15. Hazlitt aspired to paint a picture on this subject symbolizing the development of society. Rembrandt was the great Dutch painter and etcher (1607-1669).

46 2 **Doctor Chalmers**: Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), celebrated Scottish divine and author, professor of philosophy at St. Andrews and at Edinburgh. He wrote "Discourses on Christian Revelation viewed in Connection with Modern Astronomy" (1817), with the purpose of reconciling science with the conception of Christianity. See Hazlitt, "Spirit of the Age," Works, IV, 185.

46 13 "our fell of hair": "Macbeth," V, v, 11.

46 15 **Macbeth is only tolerated**: probably this refers to music written for the play by Henry Purcell (1658-1695). He was a distinguished English musical composer, organist of Westminster from 1680, and famous for "Te Deum" and "Jubilate for St. Cecilia's Day, 1694."

46 19 **the Beggar's Opera**: by John Gay (1685-1732); produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields, January 29, 1728. It presented the people of the day—highwaymen, pickpockets, and all the corruption of contemporary politics. The play became very popular throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and is the subject of a number of Hazlitt's theatrical reviews. See reviews of it in "The Round Table," Works, I, 65; in "View of English Stage," Works, VIII, 193, 254.

46 23 "Obscurity her curtain round them drew": used again by Hazlitt in his essay "On the Ideal." From a poem "To the Honorable and Reverend F. C." in Dodsley's "Collection of Poems," VI (1758), 138. The poem (anonymously published) was written by Sneyd Davies (1709-1769) and was addressed to Frederick Cornwallis, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. See *Gentleman's Magazine*, I, 174, and Nichols, "Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century," Vol. I. See also Works, XI, 570.

47 9 "Between the acting": "Julius Cæsar," II, i, 63-69.

48 12 "Thoughts that voluntary move": "Paradise Lost," III, 37.

48 17 "the words of Mercury": "Love's Labor's Lost," V, ii, at close of play.

The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo.

49 11 "the secret soul of harmony": Milton, "L'Allegro," l. 144:

The hidden soul of harmony.

49 32 "the golden cadences of poetry": "Love's Labor's Lost," IV, ii, 127.

50 3 "Sailing with supreme dominion": Gray, "The Progress of Poesy," III, 3.

50 13 The merchant, as described in Chaucer: Prologue to "Canterbury Tales," l. 275:

His resons spak he ful solempnely,  
Sowning alway th' encrees of his winning.

50 15 Every prose-writer: this part of the subject is treated at large in Hazlitt's essay, "On the Prose Style of Poets," Works, VII, 5.

51 3 Addison's Campaign: the famous political poem written by Joseph Addison (1672-1716) in 1704 in honor of the Duke of Marlborough to celebrate the victory at Blenheim. The poem is called a "Gazette in Rhyme" in Dr. Joseph Warton (1722-1800), "An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope" (1756), sect. v, pp. 267-268:

Surely the regular march which the poet has observed from one town to another, as if he had been a commissary of the army, cannot well be excused.

There is a passage in Boileau, so remarkably opposite to this fault of Addison, that one would almost be tempted to think he had the Campaign in his eye when he wrote it, if the time would admit it.

"Loin ces rimeurs craintifs, dont l'esprit phlegmatique  
Garde dans ses fureurs un ordre didactique;  
Qui chantent d'un heros les progrès éclatans,  
*Maigres Historiens, suivront l'ordre des temps.*"

Boileau, "L'Art Poétique," chap. ii

51 25 His pilgrims walk above the earth: see Bunyan, "Pilgrim's Progress," at the end of Part I.

51 31 "dews of Castalie": Castalia was an ancient fountain on the slope of Mount Parnassus sacred to the Muses and Apollo. Both classical and modern poets frequently refer to it as a source of inspiration.

51 33 Philoctetes: a legendary warrior of the Greeks who was wounded by a servant or accidentally by a poisoned arrow, and left to die on the island of Lemnos. Sophocles wrote a play about him. The speeches referred to by Hazlitt come near the close of the play.

52 10 "As I walked about": "Robinson Crusoe," Part I, chap. iii.

52 24 Richardson's romances: Hazlitt refers to the works of the first English novelist, Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) — "Pamela" (1740), "Clarissa Harlowe" (1748), "Sir Charles Grandison" (1753).

52 32 "give an echo to the seat": "Twelfth Night," II, iv, 21.

53 13 "Our poesy is as a gum": "Timon of Athens," I, i, 20 ff.

**53 20 Ossian :** or Oisín, a semihistorical Gaelic bard of the fourth century. To him was ascribed the authorship of the poems published by James Macpherson in 1760-1763. It is now commonly believed that Macpherson took great liberties with the originals, even if they ever really existed in anything at all resembling the form given in the alleged translations. No manuscripts in the original have ever been produced. However, it must be admitted that the poems contributed to break up the tyranny of the classical school of the eighteenth century and thus to prepare the way for the romantic revival. See article on Celtic Literature in *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

**54 28 "If we fly into the uttermost parts" :** Psalm cxxxix.

**56 29 Thus the gate of hell :** "Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch' entrate" (Leave every hope, ye who enter). "These words of color obscure I saw written at the top of the gate" (Norton's translation of Dante's "Inferno," Canto III, p. 11).

**57 1 "I am the tomb" :** "Inferno," Canto XI. Norton's translation, p. 51.

**57 7 Count Ugolino :** "Inferno," Canto XXXIII. Ibid. pp. 181-187. This is that most pathetic picture of the starving of Count Ugolino and his sons in the ninth circle.

**57 8 Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) :** the celebrated English portrait painter, first president of the Royal Academy, intimately associated with Samuel Johnson, Goldsmith, Garrick, Burke, and other great Englishmen of his time. We get an interesting view of Reynolds from Boswell's "Life of Johnson," also from Goldsmith's epitaph in "The Retaliation." Hazlitt refers to him many times, especially in *Essays XIII and XIV, Works, VI, 122-145*.

**57 28 lamentation of Selma :** Colma's lament in the "Songs of Selma" :

Often had they seen the grove of Salgar, the dark dwelling of white-bosomed Colma. Colma left alone on the hill, with all her voice of song ! Salgar promised to come : but the night descended around. Hear the voice of Colma, when she sat alone on the hill !

Then follows the lament :

I hear the call of years ! They say, as they pass along, why does Ossian sing ? Soon shall he lie in the narrow house, and no bard shall raise his fame ! Roll on, ye dark-brown years ; ye bring no joy on your course !

## ON ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

This was introductory to the course of lectures, "The Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth," delivered at the Surrey Institution in 1820. They were published in the same year and again in 1821. The present text is a reprint of the second edition.

**58 5 Drake:** Sir Francis Drake (1540-1596), great English admiral and circumnavigator, "the terror of the Spanish Indies in the reign of Queen Elizabeth."

**58 5 Coke:** Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634), the jurist, contemporary, of Shakspeare and Bacon.

**58 7-8 Jonson, Ben Jonson** (1573-1637); **Beaumont, Francis Beaumont** (1584-1616); **Fletcher, John Fletcher** (1579-1625).

**59 9-10 Webster, John Webster** (1580?-1625); **Decker, Thomas Dekker** (c. 1570-c. 1641?); **Marston, John Marston** (1575?-1634); **Marlow, Christopher Marlowe** (1564-1593); **Chapman, George Chapman** (1559?-1634); **Heywood, Thomas Heywood** (? 1575-1650); **Middleton, Thomas Middleton** (1570-1627); **Rowley, William Rowley** (? 1585-1642).

**59 10 "How lov'd, how honour'd once":** Pope, "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady," l. 71:

How lov'd, how honour'd once, avails thee not.

**59 30 "draw the curtain of Time":** "Twelfth Night," I, v, 249.

**60 6, 20 "of poring pedantry,"** also "pomp of elder days": sonnet written in a blank leaf of Dugdale, "Monasticon," Thomas Warton (1728-1790).

**60 18 "the sacred influence of light":** "Paradise Lost," II, 1034.

**61 20 "nor can we think what thoughts":** Dryden, "The Hind and the Panther," I, 315:

Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive.

**61 29 "Think,"** says Shakespear: "Cymbeline," III, iv.

**62 9 "by nature's own":** "Twelfth Night," I, v, 257.

**62 12 "where Pan, knit with the Graces":** "Paradise Lost," IV, 266.

**62 15 that "there are more things":** "Hamlet," I, v, 166.

**63 8 "matchless, divine, what we will":** Pope, "Imitations of Horace," Book II, Epistle I, l. 70:

Style the divine, the matchless, what you will.

**64 3 "they were sought after":** Dr. Johnson.

**65 5 "less than the smallest dwarfs":** "Paradise Lost," I, 779.

**65 7 "desiring this man's art":** Shakspeare, Sonnet XXIV, l. 7.

**65 13 "in shape and gesture proudly eminent":** "Paradise Lost," I, 590.

**65 25 "his soul was like a star":** Wordsworth, "Milton, Written in London, 1802."

**65 27 "drew after him":** "Paradise Lost," II, 692.

**66 1 Venice Preserved:** published in 1682; a very popular play even in the early nineteenth century.

66 15 Jonson's learned sock : Milton, "L'Allegro," l. 132.

69 12 "penetrable stuff" : "Hamlet," III, iv, 36.

69 23 "My peace I give unto you" : John xiv, 27.

69 25 "they should love one another" : John xv, 12.

69 27 "Woman, behold thy son" : John xix, 26.

70 28 "to the Jews a stumbling block" : 1 Corinthians i, 23.

71 2 "we perceive a softness coming over the heart of a nation" : as yet no one has discovered the source of this quotation. See *Notes and Queries*, ninth series, VII, 388.

71 7 "soft as sinews" : "Hamlet," III, iii, 71.

71 26 "The best of men" : Dekker, "The Honest Whore," Part I, Act V, scene ii.

72 26 Tasso by Fairfax : Edward Fairfax (1580?-1635). The first edition of his translation of Tasso, "Jerusalem Deliver'd," appeared in 1600.

72 27 Ariosto by Harrington : Sir John Harrington (1561-1612) published a translation of Ariosto, "Orlando Furioso."

72 27 Homer and Hesiod by Chapman : George Chapman (1559-1634), dramatist and translator. His "Iliad" was published in 1611, the "Odyssey" in 1616.

72 28 Virgil long before : probably refers to the translation of the "Æneid" by Gawain Douglas (1474-1522). The translation into ten-syllable meter was made between 1501 and 1513.

72 28 Ovid soon after : Ovid was translated by Arthur Golding in 1565-1575.

72 28 Sir Thomas North (1535?-1601?) : from this translation of Plutarch (1579) Shakspeare drew most of his material for his Roman plays.

72 31 Catiline and Sejanus : classical plays by Ben Jonson, the former in 1611, the latter in 1603.

73 3 the satirist Aretine : Pietro Aretino (1492-1557), an Italian writer of the sixteenth century, author of comedies, sonnets, licentious dialogues, and a few religious works. When very young he was banished from Arezzo on account of a satirical sonnet which he composed against indulgences. According to some accounts he died by falling from a chair in a fit of laughter caused by hearing an indecent story.

73 3 Machiavel : Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), the distinguished Italian statesman and writer, author of "Il Principe" (The Prince), 1513.

73 3 Castiglione : Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529), diplomatist and man of letters. His famous work was "Il Cortegiano" (The Courtier), called by the Italians "Il Libro d'Oro" (The Book of Gold), and was published by Aldus in Venice in 1528. It was first translated into

English by Thomas Hoby in 1561. Johnson called it "the best book that ever was written on good breeding."

**73 5 Ronsard** : Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585), famous French poet, one of the *Pléiade*, a group of seven writers who applied to the vernacular language the critical principles which they had learned from the classics.

**73 5 Du Bartas** : Guillaume de Salluste du Bartas (1544-1590). His chief work, "La Sepmaine," a poem on the creation of the world, went through thirty editions in six years. He was much admired by Spenser, Ben Jonson, and other Elizabethan poets. Joshua Sylvester made a translation of the book in 1598.

**74 14 "Fortunate fields and groves"** : "Paradise Lost," III, 568-570 :

Like those Hesperian Gardens famed of old,  
Fortunate fields and groves, &c.

**74 22 Prospero's Enchanted Island** : it has been thought probable that Shakspeare in writing "The Tempest" had before him the account by Jourdan of the wreck of Sir George Somers's ship in a tempest off the Bermudas, under the title "A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Ile of Divels," etc. Setebos and perhaps other names he may have taken not from this book but from Eden's "History of Travaile," 1577.

**74 26 "Right well I wote"** : "Faerie Queene," Book II, Proem 1.

**75 29 Lear is founded on an old ballad** : this ballad, "King Leir," to be found in Percy's "Reliques," is probably not so old as Shakspeare. The play is based on the "Historia Regum Britonum" (c. 1130) of Geoffrey of Monmouth, but Shakspeare probably took the story from Holinshed's Chronicle.

**75 29 Othello on an Italian novel** : "The Hecatommithi" of Giraldi Cinthio (1504-1573), published in 1565.

**76 2 "those bodiless creations"** : "Hamlet," III, iv, 138.

**76 8 "Your face, my Thane"** : "Macbeth," I, v, 60.

**76 13 Tyrrel and Forrest** : "Richard III," IV, ii and iii. Tyrrel, Dighton, and Forrest at the order of Richard killed the princes in the Tower.

**76 20 "thick and slab"** : "Macbeth," IV, i, 32.

**76 25 "snatched a wild and fearful joy"** : Gray, "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," ll. 38-40 :

Still as they run they look behind,  
They hear a voice in every wind,  
And snatch a fearful joy.

**76 29 The tales of Boccaccio**: Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375). "The Decameron," one hundred tales supposed to be told by a group of ten people on ten successive days in 1348, the year of the great plague in Florence.

**76 30 Fletcher the poet**: this is perhaps a bit confusing, as one might think at first of Phineas Fletcher, author of "The Purple Island." However, John Fletcher (1579-1625), who died of the plague, is intended.

**76 30 Marlow was stabbed**: Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593). To escape the plague which was raging in London in 1593, he was living in Deptford, and there in a tavern brawl he received a wound in the head, his own knife being turned against him by a serving man, upon whom he had drawn it. The parish record bears the entry, "Christopher Marlowe, slain by Francis Archer, the 1 of June, 1593."

**76 34 "The course of true love"**: "A Midsummer Night's Dream," I, i, 134.

**77 3 "The age of chivalry"**: a very famous passage. Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France" (edited by E. J. Payne, 1885), p. 89.

**77 4 Jousts and tournaments**: Strutt, "Sports and Pastimes of the People of England" (edited by Hone, 1838), p. 125.

Tournaments and jousts, though often confounded with each other, differed materially. The tournament was a conflict with many knights, divided into parties and engaged at the same time. The joust was a separate trial of skill, when only one man was opposed to another.

**77 6 Sir Philip Sidney** (1554-1586): poet and romance writer, always considered as the type of English chivalry. The story of his death at Zutphen is known everywhere.

**77 8 the gentle Surrey**: Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (c. 1517-1547). His name is associated with that of Wyatt in Tottel's "Miscellany" (1557). He has the distinction of being, in his translation of the "Æneid," the first to introduce blank verse into English literature.

**77 13 Sir John Suckling** (1609-1642): English poet. From his father he inherited large estates. He was a noted gambler and has the distinction of being the inventor of the game of cribbage.

**77 14 "Who prized black eyes"**: "The Session of the Poets," verse 20.

**77 17 "Like strength reposing"**: Keats, "Sleep and Poetry," l. 237:

'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.

**77 24 "they heard the tumult"**: Cowper, "The Task," IV, 99-100.

**77 31 Fletcher's Noble Kinsmen**: this play was printed in quarto in 1634. On the title-page it was stated to have been written by "the

admirable worthies of their time, Mr. John Fletcher and Mr. William Shakespeare." Modern scholarship is disposed to accept this, granting to Fletcher the most of the play. See A. H. Thorndike's "Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakspeare."

**78 5 Saturnalian licence**: originally the great festival of Saturn was celebrated on the nineteenth of December, but after Cæsar's reform of the calendar, on the seventeenth. However, in popular usage the celebration lasted seven days. The time was one of general joy and mirth. No punishment was inflicted, no war was declared. All distinctions were forgotten so that masters ate with slaves and the toga was not worn. Hence the phrase has come to mean absolute unrestraint.

**78 13 Returne from Parnassus**: "Printed in 1606, 4to, but written during the reign of Elizabeth. It is a shrewd and lively dramatic satire on many of the poets and playwrights of the period, like the 'Great Assizes holden in Parnassus,' 1645, and Suckling's 'Session of the Poets'" (W. C. Hazlitt).

**78 30 "it snowed of meat and drink"**: "Canterbury Tales," Prologue, 345.

**78 34 as Mr. Lamb observes**: cf. "Specimens of English Dramatic Poets," Lamb's note attached to Marston's "What You Will."

**79 4 "in act and complement extern"**: "Othello," I, i, 62-63:

The native act and figure of my heart  
In compliment extern.

**79 11 Deckar has given an admirable description of a mad-house**: "Honest Whore," Part I, Act V, scene ii.

**79 18 "A Mad World, my Masters"**: a comedy by Thomas Middleton (1608).

**80 11 "like birdlime, brains and all"**: "Othello," II, i, 128.

**80 23 *Materiam superabat opus***: Ovid, "Metamorphoses," II, 5.

**81 11 "but Pan is a God"**: John Lyly, "Midas," Act IV, scene i.

## ON THE PLEASURE OF PAINTING

Our present text is the first of the two papers in "Table Talk" on this subject. Our reprint is from the second edition of 1824, a reprint of the first edition (Vol. I, 1821; Vol. II, 1822). These essays appeared in the *London Magazine* for December, 1820.

**82 1 "There is a pleasure in painting"**: see Dryden, "Spanish, Friar," II, 1:

There is a pleasure, sure, in being mad, which none but madmen know.

Or Cowper, "The Task, the Timepiece," ll. 285-286:

There is a pleasure in poetic pains  
Which only poets know.

82 15 "study with joy her manner": Cowper, "The Task," III, 227-228:

. . . acknowledges with joy  
His manner, and with rapture tastes his style.

82 26 *spolia opima*: the spoils taken by one Roman general from another.

83 16 "more tedious than a twice-told tale": "King John," III, iv, 108:

Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale.

83 note Werter: "The Sorrows of Werter" by Goethe (1749-1832).

This extract is taken from Letter VIII, May 26. This book was published in October, 1774, and made Goethe widely famous. It is the book of the age, expressing the pain under which the thoughtful men of the time were languishing. See Carlyle, "Lectures on German Literature"; also Hazlitt, "On the German Drama," Works, V, 358-364.

84 7 "My mind to me a kingdom is": the first line of the poem attributed to Sir Edward Dyer (1550?-1607).

84 11 "Pure in the last recesses of the mind": "Dryden's translation of the Second Satire of Persius, line 233. According to Frances Reynolds ('Johnsonian Miscellanies' (edited by G. B. Hill), II, 272), the lines are quoted by Johnson at the end of an eloquent eulogium of Mrs. Thrale" (Works, VI, 470).

85 8 "palpable to feeling as to sight": perhaps remembering the line from "Othello," I, ii, 76:

'T is probable and palpable to thinking.

85 26 Wilson: Richard Wilson (1714-1782), famous landscape painter, one of the original members of the Royal Academy in 1768. He has been called "The English Claude." For frequent references to Wilson, see Hazlitt, "Conversations of Northcote," Works, Vol. VI.

86 17 The first head I ever tried to paint: "Memoirs," I, 108, note:

The person who sat to him for this picture (nearly destroyed by megilp) was an old cottager he met near Manchester. She died very soon after her likeness was taken. The picture used for a long time to hang in Mr. John Hunt's room when he was in Coldbath Fields Prison, and Mr. Hazlitt would go there and gaze at it fondly. It is now in the hands of the family.

See Introduction, p. xix; also Hazlitt, "Conversations of James Northcote" (edited by Edmund Gosse, 1894), pp. xvii ff.

**86 32** I had seen an old head by Rembrandt at Burleigh-House: he is supposed to have been at the age of about seventeen (1795) when Hazlitt made the visit to Burleigh which left so vivid an impression upon his memory. He made his second visit probably in 1803. In 1824, in writing of the pictures at Burleigh House, he speaks of the great difference between the effect then and now:

Thy [Burleigh House] groves were leafless then as now: it was the middle of winter twice that I visited thee before; but the lark mounted in the sky, and the sun smote my youthful blood with its slant ray, and the ploughman whistled as he drove his team afield; Hope spread out its glad vistas through thy fair domains, Oh, Burleigh! Fancy decked thy walls with works of sovereign art, and it was spring, not winter, in my breast. All is still the same, like a petrification of the mind—the same things in the same places; but their effect is not the same upon me. I am twenty years the worse for *wear and tear*. . . . Ah! thought I, there is that fine old head by Rembrandt; there within those cold grey walls, the painter of old age is enshrined, immortalized in some of his inimitable works.

**87 4** Sir Joshua: Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792); see "Conversations of James Northcote." This point is discussed in Hazlitt's two papers on Sir Joshua Reynolds's "Discourses," especially the second, in "Table Talk."

In connection with this the following passage is interesting:

Among other essays in painting which he made upon commission, was in half length of Sir Joshua Reynolds, with which he was put out of conceit by witnessing a performance of Indian jugglers; and a head of Lear, which, from all that I can learn, was quite an early experiment. It is a sketch of the head and shoulders of the old mad king, with his white hair waving in the wind, very characteristic and Shakespearian.

He was very impatient with himself, and when he could not produce the effect he desired, he has been known to cut the canvas into ribbons. The grand object of his ambition as an artist was the illustration of the subject of Jacob's Ladder; and here he never, in his own estimation, so much as approached success.

In 1804 he commenced a portrait of his father, who was now beginning to get on in years. "I am sure my father had as little vanity for the art as most persons, yet when he had sat to me a few times . . . he grew evidently uneasy when it was a fine day, that is, when the sun shone into the room, so that we could not paint; and when it became cloudy, began to bustle about and ask me if I was not getting ready. . . . Between my father's love of sitting and mine of painting, we hit upon a tolerable likeness at last; but the picture is cracked and gone, and megilp (the bane of the English School) has destroyed as fine an old Nonconformist head as we could hope to see in these degenerate times."

The operating of the megilp has not been quite so fatal in the present instance as the painter's words might leave us to conclude. The picture is still in existence, and although the deleterious element in the old varnish had undoubtedly damaged it to some slight extent, it is in very fair preservation at this moment, after upwards of sixty years' exposure to all atmospheric influences. It was

exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1806, where perhaps the artist had made up his mind to let it go and to give no more last touches. . . .

He had abandoned now all expectation of succeeding as an artist; but it was while he was in London, in 1805, as I have some reason to think, that he painted the portrait of Lamb in the costume of a Venetian Senator, which has this double interest, that is, the likeness of so dear and old a friend, and that it was the last time that he took the pencil in hand.<sup>1</sup> The picture represents Lamb as he was about thirty, and it is by far the most pleasing and characteristic resemblance we possess of him as a comparatively young man. The costume was the painter's whim and must be said to detract from the effect of the whole ("Memoirs," I, 109-113).

**88 5** "as in a glass darkly": 1 Corinthians xiii, 12.

**88 7** "sees into the life of things": Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," l. 50.

**88 18 Jan Steen** (1626-1679): famous Flemish figure painter. He liked to paint the comedy of daily life in a kindly manner, usually quite differently from Hogarth.

**88 18 Gerard Dow** (1613-1680): celebrated Flemish painter. He was remarkable for the time and pains which he spent on all the details of his pictures.

**88 20** "mist, the common gloss of theologians": "Paradise Lost," V, 435-436.

**89 4 Opie**: John Opie (1761-1807), historical and portrait painter, born in Cornwall. He was brought to London in 1780 under the patronage of Peter Pindar (Dr. Wolcot). He wrote and lectured on art.

**89 4 Fuseli**: see page 19 and note.

**89 4 Northcote**: James Northcote (1746-1831), historical and portrait painter, a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds. His works number about two thousand. See Hazlitt, "Conversations of James Northcote," Works, Vol. VI.

**89 11 Richardson** . . . tells a story: Jonathan Richardson (1665-1745), author and portrait painter. He was an intimate friend of Pope, whose head he painted. He wrote a number of essays on painting. Sir Joshua Reynolds said that Richardson understood his art scientifically, but that his manner was cold and hard.

**90 15-16 Correggio** (1494-1534), **Leonardo da Vinci** (1452-1519), **Andrea del Sarto** (1487-1531): distinguished Italian painters.

**90 19** "That you might almost say": John Donne, "An Anatomy of the World, Second Anniversary," l. 246:

. . . Her pure and eloquent blood  
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,  
That one might almost say her body thought.

<sup>1</sup>Perhaps with the exception of a copy of Titian, which he attempted to make for a friend later in life; but this was never completed.

**90** note 1. **The famous Schiller** (1759-1805): Hazlitt knew Schiller's "Don Carlos" and "The Robbers" and was much influenced by the views of political and intellectual liberty expressed by Schiller. See Works, V, 358-364.

**90** note 2. **The rich *impasting***: impasting is the thick covering of the paint.

**90** note 2. **Titian** (1477-1576); **Giorgione** (1477-1510).

**91** 8 old **Abraham Tucker**: By 1804 Hazlitt's abridgment of Tucker's "Light of Nature Revealed" had been begun. See Works, IV, 371-385.

**91** 21 "the source of thirty years": see Northcote, "Life of Reynolds," II, 286.

**91** 31 **Shaftesbury's Characteristics**: "Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times" was the famous work of the Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper. See p. 13 and note. His work was illustrated by the well-known line engraver, Simon Gribelin (1661-1733). Gribelin went to England in 1680 and was very popular among the nobility. His most famous work was the "Apotheosis of James I" on the ceiling of the banqueting room in Whitehall.

**92** 10 "ever in the haunch of winter sings": "2 Henry IV," IV, iv, 92.

**92** 20 **Correggio**, "*I also am a painter!*": see Vasari, "Lives" (edited by Blashfield and Hopkins), III, 32 seq. Though Correggio was exceedingly sensitive and modest, this legend regarding him long persisted, "*Anchio son pittore*" (I also am a painter).

**92** 26 **Honourable Mr. Skeffington**: Sir Lumley St. George Skeffington (1771-1850), author of "The Sleeping Beauty" and other plays.

**92** 30 the battle of **Austerlitz**: December 2, 1805, a great victory for Napoleon.

**93** 5 but he himself is gone: Hazlitt's father, William Hazlitt, the elder, died July 16, 1820. He had lived and preached in the village of Wem from 1787 to 1805. From there he moved to Addlestone, Surrey, thence to Crediton and Winswood.

## ON READING OLD BOOKS

This essay appeared first in the *London Magazine* for 1821 and was reprinted in "The Plain Speaker" (1826) as the third essay in Volume II. The differences between the two imprints are immaterial. Our text follows that of "The Plain Speaker."

**94** 4 **Tales of My Landlord**: a series of Scott's novels appearing under the title, "Tales of My Landlord, collected and arranged by Jedidiah Cleisbotham," beginning with "Black Dwarf" and "Old Mortality" in

1816, and including "Rob Roy" (1817), "Heart of Midlothian" (1818), "Bride of Lammermoor" (1819), and "Legend of Montrose" (1819).

**94 6 Lady Morgan** (1783 or 1785-1859): Sydney Owenson, daughter of Robert Owenson, was the author of stirring Irish tales and was very popular in her day.

**94 8 Anastasius**: "Anastasius or Memoirs of a Greek, Written at the Close of the Eighteenth Century" appeared anonymously in 1819. It was received most favorably and was assigned to Byron. However, its author was Thomas Hope (1774?-1831). The hero is a sort of oriental Gil Blas. The book was discussed in the *Edinburgh Review*, March, 1821.

**94 10 Delphine**: a novel by Madame de Staël, published in 1802. See the *Edinburgh Review*, April, 1803.

**94 18 Andrew Millar** (1707-1768): one of the most eminent booksellers of the eighteenth century, publisher of Fielding's works and of Dr. Johnson's Dictionary. Dr. Johnson once said of him, "I respect Millar, Sir, he has raised the price of literature." See E. Marston, "Sketches of Some Booksellers of the Time of Dr. Samuel Johnson" (1902).

**94 19 Thurloe's State Papers**: a collection of the letters of John Thurloe (1616-1668) published in 1742. He was a very capable secretary of state during the Protectorate and has left in his papers a valuable record of the doings of the time.

**94 20 Sir William Temple** (1628-1699): his "Essays" were published in 1680 and 1692. Temple is to be remembered as a distinguished diplomat and the patron of Dean Swift.

**94 21 Sir Godfrey Kneller** (1646-1723): his original name was Gottfried Kniller. He became famous for his portraits of royalty. It was while sitting to Kneller for a portrait, commissioned by Pepys, that James heard the news of the landing of the Prince of Orange, the future William III.

**95 20 rifaccimentos**: a new modeling or recasting of a literary work. The proper plural according to the Italian would be *rifacimenti*.

**96 8 Fortunatus's Wishing-Cap**: in "The Nights" of Straparola, an Italian novelist of the sixteenth century. For an interesting account of this legend and its connection with the drama, see Professor C. H. Herford's "Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century."

**96 11 Bruscambille**: Sterne, "Tristram Shandy," Book III, chap. xxxv.

**96 12 Peregrine Pickle** (1751): by Tobias Smollett (1721-1771).

**96 12 Tom Jones**: Masquerade, Book XIII, chap. vii; Thrackum and Square, Book III, chap. iii; Molly Seagrim, Book IV, chap. viii; Sophia,

Book V, chap. iv; Aunt's Lecture, Book VII, chap. iii. See Hazlitt, Works, VII, 3.

**97 14 Ballantyne press:** James Ballantyne (1772-1833), a great friend of Walter Scott, established the press which printed Scott's works. It will be remembered that Scott assumed the great debt caused by the failure of this concern and spent the money from his books in paying the creditors.

**97 15 Minerva press:** from this press in Leadenhall Street, London, were issued in the late years of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century popular romances, highly colored and very sensational.

**97 21 Cooke's pocket-edition:** Cooke's "Select Edition of British Novels" (1792). John Cooke (1731-1810), bookseller, made large fortunes in publishing popular works in weekly parts. Mr. W. C. Hazlitt says that Hazlitt became acquainted with this book through his father's being an original subscriber to the series. "In those days Cooke's edition of the British poets came up. . . . How I loved these little six-penny numbers, containing whole poets! I doated on their size, on their wrapper, containing lists of other poets, and on the engravings from Kirk" (Leigh Hunt, "Autobiography" (1860), p. 76).

**97 24 Romance of the Forest:** published 1791, by Mrs. Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), writer of romantic tales which abound in descriptions of scenes of mystery and terror.

**97 25 "sweet in the mouth . . . bitter in the belly":** Revelation x, 9.

**97 27 "gay creatures":** Milton, "Comus," l. 299.

**98 2 Tom Jones discovers Square:** "Tom Jones," Book V, chap. v.

**98 3 Parson Adams:** "Joseph Andrews," Book IV, chap. xiv.

**98 6 Joseph Andrews:** Henry Fielding's first novel, published 1742, was inspired by the first English novel, "Pamela" (1740), by Richardson.

**98 13 Major Bath:** in Fielding's novel, "Joseph Andrews."

**98 14 Commodore Trunnion:** in "Peregrine Pickle," by Smollett.

**98 14 Trim:** in Sterne's "Tristram Shandy."

**98 14 Uncle Toby:** in "Tristram Shandy."

**98 15 Gil Blas:** in Le Sage's satire of same name.

**98 15 Dame Lorenza Sephora:** in "Gil Blas."

**98 16 Laura:** the lady to whom Petrarch wrote.

**98 16 Lucretia:** in "Joseph Andrews."

**98 30 Chubb's Tracts:** "Tracts and Posthumous Works," by Thomas Chubb (1697-1747), published in 1754. His tracts won for him a place among the deists of the eighteenth century.

**99 5 "fate, free-will":** "Paradise Lost," II, 560.

**99 9 "Would I had never seen":** Christopher Marlowe's (1564-1593) "Dr. Faustus," scene xix.

**99 11 Hartley, Hume, Berkeley:** David Hartley (1705-1757), "Observations on Man" (1749); David Hume (1711-1776); George Berkeley (1685-1753).

**99 11 Locke:** John Locke (1632-1704), famous philosopher, author of "Essay on the Human Understanding" (1690). The first book treats of innate ideas, the second traces the origin of ideas, the third deals with languages, and the fourth lays down the limits of the understanding.

**99 13 Hobbes:** Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the noted English philosopher, gave an exposition of his political philosophy in his "Leviathan" (1651).

**99 19 New Eloise:** Rousseau's "La Nouvelle Héloïse" was published in 1761, his "Contrat Social" in 1762, his "Émile" in 1762, and his "Confessions," begun in 1766 and finished not long before his death in 1778. References here are to Part VI, Letters IX-XI.

**99 32 I have spoken elsewhere:** on the Character of Rousseau in "The Round Table," Works, Vol. I.

**100 6 Sir Fopling Flutter:** in the comedy, "The Man of Mode" (1676), by Sir George Etherege (1635?-1691).

**100 18 *leurre de dupe*:** Rousseau, "Confessions," IV, 4: "A lure for a gull." See Works, IV, 5; VII, 225.

**100 20 "a load to sink":** "Henry VIII," III, i, 2.

**100 note a friend, who had some lottery puffs:** Charles Lamb. Writing to Mrs. Hazlitt, November 7, 1809, Mary Lamb says, "A man in the India House has resigned, by which Charles will get twenty pounds a year; and White has prevailed on him to write some more lottery puffs."

Mr. Lucas says: "Of the lottery puffs we shall probably never know any more. They were, I imagine, written for Bish, the principal lottery contractor, whose devices to interest speculators were very varied and ingenious" ("Life of Lamb," I, 299).

**101 9 "Marcian Colonna":** title of a volume of poetry published in 1820 under the name of Barry Cornwall (B. W. Procter). The line quoted by Hazlitt begins Lamb's sonnet.

**101 10 Eve of St. Agnes:** this poem by Keats was published in 1820.

**101 12 "come like shadows":** "Macbeth," IV, i, 3.

**101 26 the great preacher:** Edward Irving (1792-1834) was born at Annan, near Ecclefechan, Carlyle's birthplace. While he attended Edinburgh University he gave private lessons to Jane Welsh. At Kirkcaldy in 1816 he made the acquaintance of Carlyle, who had come to teach in the opposite school. Carlyle once said, "But for Irving I had never known what the communion of man with man means."

Before he went to London in July, 1822, he had given Carlyle an introduction to Jane Welsh. He always loved Jane Welsh, who said on one occasion, "If I had married Irving the tongues would never have been heard." His career before he went to London, his popularity and success there, have made him one of the most striking figures in ecclesiastical history. There are many references to him in Lamb's Letters and in Crabb Robinson's Diary. See also Hazlitt's account of him, in "Spirit of the Age," IV, 222.

101 30 "as the hart that panteth": Psalm xlii, 1.

101 32 Schiller's *Robbers*: this play was printed in 1781 and produced in 1782. It made a great impression in Germany and in England.

The *Robbers* was the first play I ever read: and the effect it produced upon me was the greatest. It stunned me like a blow, and I have not recovered enough from it to describe how it was. . . . Five-and-twenty years have elapsed since I first read the translation of the *Robbers*, but they have not blotted the impression from my mind. — "Lectures on Age of Elizabeth," Lecture VIII (1820).

101 33 "Giving my stock": "As You Like It," II, i, 48-49: .

Giving thy sum of more  
To that which had too much.

102 1 Coleridge's fine *Sonnet*: this sonnet was printed in 1796. The note appended seems to imply that Coleridge wrote it on his first reading of "The *Robbers*" at Cambridge not later than 1794. If so, he could have known Schiller only in the English version.

102 7 I believe I may date: see "My First Acquaintance with Poets," pp. 175 ff.

102 12 Valentine, Tattle, Miss Prue: characters in Congreve's "Love for Love" (1695).

102 19 *Intus et in cute*: Persius, "Satires," III, 30:

Ego te intus et in cute novi.

I knew thee intimately and in the skin.

102 24 Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829): the famous natural philosopher. His lectures at the Royal Academy began in 1801.

102 31 The *Spectator*, etc.: see "On Periodical Essayists," p. 14.

103 8 *Clarissa*: heroine of "Clarissa Harlowe" (1748).

103 8 *Clementina*: heroine of "Sir Charles Grandison" (1753).

103 8 *Pamela*: heroine of "Pamela" (1740).

103 8 "with every trick": "All's Well," I, 1, 107.

103 15 Miss —: probably the lady of "Liber Amoris," Works, VII, 501.

**103 15** "that ligament, fine as it was": "Tristram Shandy," Book VI, chap. x, The Story of Le Fever. The story continues from chap. vi to chap. xii.

**103 21** His story of the Hawk: "The Decameron," by Boccaccio, fifth day, ninth story. See in "Lectures on Age of Elizabeth," Works, V, 346-347:

Federigo being in love, without meeting with any return, spends all his substance, having nothing left but one poor hawk, which he gives to his lady for her dinner when she comes to his house; she, knowing this, changes her resolution, and marries him, by which means he becomes very rich.

**103 24** I remember, as long ago as the year 1798: it will be remembered that this was the year in which Hazlitt met Coleridge at Shrewsbury and later Wordsworth at Alfoxden. See "My First Acquaintance with Poets," pp. 175 ff.

**103 25** Farquhar . . . Recruiting Officer: Farquhar (1678-1707), prominent dramatist of the Restoration period, produced "The Recruiting Officer" in 1706. While he was in the army and stationed at Shrewsbury he wrote the play.

**103 26** "at one proud swoop": "Macbeth," IV, iii, 219:

At one fell swoop.

**103 28** Burke's Reflections: see pp. 29 ff. and notes.

**103** note During the peace of Amiens: the terms of the peace of Amiens were concluded in March, 1802. Negotiations were opened by Napoleon to allow him time to organize his resources. In May, 1803, England anticipated a renewal of his attack by a declaration of war. See Hazlitt's account in his "Life of Napoleon," chaps. xxx and xxxi.

**104 4** "with all its giddy raptures": Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey":

That time is past  
 . . . . .  
 And all its dizzy raptures.

**104 5** "embalmed with odours": "Paradise Lost," II, 843.

**104 14** "His form had not yet lost": "Paradise Lost," I, 591.

**104 18** "falls flat": *ibid.* I, 460-461.

**104 28** Letter to a Noble Lord: in 1796 an attack was made by the Duke of Bedford and Lord Lauderdale upon Burke on account of the pension which he received from the government. His reply in the letter with the name given above (1796) is one of our classics, called by

Lord Morley the most splendid repartee in the English language. See "Life of Burke," by John Morley, p. 198. The reader should compare it with Hazlitt's Letter to William Gifford, Works, Vol. I. See Hazlitt, "Political Essays," Character of Burke, Works, Vol. III, especially pp. 335-336.

**104 33 Junius**: the signature of the anonymous writer of letters who has succeeded in baffling the curiosity of critics for more than a hundred years. These letters, attacking the government, appeared in the *Public Advertiser*, a paper published by Woodfall, from January 21, 1769, to January 21, 1772. The sensation created by these attacks not only on parties and policies but also upon private individuals was tremendous. The authorship has been attributed to at least thirty-five persons, of whom Burke was the choice of contemporary opinion. At present the strongest evidence seems to point to Sir Philip Francis (1740-1818), a prominent Whig politician and a strong pamphleteer. The arguments for and against the authorship of Francis have been summarized and examined by Sir Leslie Stephen in the "Dictionary of National Biography" under the name of Francis, Vol. XX.

**105 4 "he, like an eagle"**: "Coriolanus," V, vi, 115.

**105 15 Essay on Marriage**: no such essay by Wordsworth is at present known to exist. It would seem either that "Marriage" is a misprint for some other word, or that Hazlitt was mistaken in the subject of the essay referred to by Coleridge. Hazlitt is probably recalling a conversation with Coleridge in Shropshire at the beginning of 1798 (see "My First Acquaintance with Poets," p. 175), at which time a "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff" (1793) was the only notable work which Wordsworth had published (Works, VII, 501).

**105 note Is this the present Earl?** James Maitland, eighth earl of Lauderdale (1759-1839), succeeded his father in August, 1789. See Works, VII, 501.

**106 13 Lord Clarendon's (1608-1674)**: "History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England" (1702-1704).

**106 20 Froissart**: Jean Froissart (1338-1410?), French chronicler and raconteur.

**106 20 Hollingshed**: Ralph Holinshed (died about 1580), "Chronicles of Englande, Scotlande, and Ireland" (1577).

**106 20 Stowe**: John Stow (1525?-1605), "Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles" (1561); "A Survey of London" (1598).

**106 20 Fuller's Worthies**: Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), "The History of the Worthies of England" (1662).

**106 23 A Wife for a Month** (1623).

**106 24 Thierry and Theodoret** (1621).

**106 26 Thucydides:** the great Athenian historian, born in 471 B.C. and died about 401. Macaulay regarded him as "the greatest historian that ever lived."

**106 26 Guicciardini:** Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), prominent Italian historian.

**106 28 Loves of Persiles and Sigismunda:** the last work of Cervantes, published in 1617, the year after Cervantes's death.

**106 28 Galatea:** the first work of Cervantes (1585), a pastoral romance.

**106 29 "another Yarrow":** Yarrow Unvisited," by Wordsworth. It will be remembered that Wordsworth wrote several poems of which the scene is laid upon the banks of the Yarrow.

#### ON A LANDSCAPE OF NICOLAS POUSSIN

This essay first appeared in the *London Magazine* for August, 1821; it was then reprinted as the first essay in the second volume of "Table Talk" (1822).

Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) was a celebrated French painter. See Hazlitt, "Notes of a Journey through France and Italy," Works, Vol. IX, especially pp. 107-110. The large part of Poussin's best work is preserved in the Louvre Gallery at Paris, with a few good examples in the National Gallery in London.

**107 1 "And blind Orion":** Keats, "Endymion," II, 198:

At this with madden'd stare,  
And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood;  
Like old Decalion mountain'd o'er the flood,  
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.

**107 13 the "grey dawn and the Pleiades":** "Paradise Lost," VII, 373-374.

**107 26 Sir Joshua has done him justice:** "the favourite subjects of Poussin were ancient fables; and no painter was ever better qualified to paint such subjects, not only from his being eminently skilled in the knowledge of the ceremonies, customs and habits of the ancients, but from his being so well acquainted with the different characters which those who invented them gave to their allegorical figures."

For the entire subject see Joshua Reynolds, "Discourses," V.

**108 3 "denote a foregone conclusion":** "Othello," III, iii.

**108 9 "take up the isles as a very little thing":** Isaiah xl, 15.

**109 6 "gives to airy nothing":** "Midsummer Night's Dream," V, i, 16.

**110 10 His Giants** : these are pictures by Poussin, dealing with Jupiter, Pan, Bacchus, and other mythological subjects, in the National and Dulwich Galleries in London and in the Louvre in Paris.

**110 note Vignuel de Marville** : this passage is taken from "Memoirs of the Life of Nicholas Poussin," by Maria Graham (Lady Callcott) (1820), pp. 35-36.

**110 note Mr. West** : Benjamin West (1738-1820), American history and portrait painter, was born at Springfield, Pennsylvania. In 1763 he settled in London as a historical painter and became eminently successful. On the death of Sir Joshua Reynolds he was elected his successor as president of the Royal Academy, an office which he held for twenty-eight years. He died in 1820 and was buried in St. Paul's, London.

**111 1, 2 Plague of Athens, the Deluge** : both pictures are in the Louvre Gallery in Paris, Nos. 710 and 739 (see Hazlitt, IX, 491). A repetition of the former picture, formerly in the Colonna Palace at Rome, was presented to the National Gallery in 1838. The proper title is "Plague among the Philistines at Ashdod" (No. 165).

**111 19 a picture of Aurora** : "Cephalus and Aurora," by Poussin, in the National Gallery (No. 65).

**111 22 Tithonus** : by the prayers of Eos (Dawn) who loved him, Tithonus obtained from the gods immortality, but not eternal youth, in consequence of which he completely shrank together in his old age; whence a decrepit old man was proverbially called Tithonus. See Tennyson's poem of that name.

**112 5 Satyrs and Bacchantes** : in Mr. Angerstein's collection there was a "Dance of Bacchanals," by Poussin, now No. 42 in the National Gallery, Works, IX, 14.

**112 8 "Leaping like wanton kids"** : Spenser, "Faerie Queene," Book I, canto vi, stanza 14.

**112 24 picture of the shepherds** : see Hazlitt's essay, "On the Progress of Art," in Works, I, 163. This picture, often mentioned by Hazlitt, is in the Louvre (No. 734). It expressed, according to some, the idea of the shortness of life.

**112 27 Et ego in Arcadia vixi** : this refers to Poussin's celebrated picture of some Arcadian shepherds standing near a tomb and reading with surprise this inscription upon it. The source of the Latin remains undiscovered. See *Notes and Queries*, sixth series, VI, 396, where preceding references are given.

**113 5 "within the book and volume of the brain"** : "Hamlet," I, v, 1.

**113 11 "he who knows of these delights"** : Milton, "Sonnet to Mr. Lawrence" :

He who of those delights can judge, and spare  
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

**113 26 the Caracci**: usually spelled Carracci. There were the brothers Agostino (1558-1602) and Annibale (1560-1609) and their cousin Lodovico (1555-1619), all founders of the Bolognese school of painting.

**114 3 "Old Genius"**: "Faerie Queene," Book III, canto vi, stanzas 31-32.

**114 15 Blenheim**: see Works, IX, 71-75.

**114 16 Mr. Angerstein**: John Julius Angerstein (1735-1823), rich merchant and patron of the fine arts. His collection of about forty famous paintings became the basis of the present National Gallery. See "The Picture Galleries in England," Works, Vol. IX.

**114 20 since the Louvre is stripped**: in the twenty years after 1793 great art treasures were brought to the Louvre in consequence of the successive French victories in different parts of Europe. In 1815 when the allies took possession of Paris most of these pictures were returned to the countries from which they had come.

**114 22 as a rich jewel in his Iron Crown**: Napoleon was crowned in Paris on December 2, 1804. A deputation of the republic of Lombardy came from Italy to Paris to offer him the Iron Crown of Charlemagne. It consisted of a plain circlet of gold covering a ring of iron, said to be composed of the nails of the Cross. The ceremony took place in the cathedral of Milan. Taking the Iron Crown from the hands of the Archbishop of Milan, Napoleon placed it upon his head, calling aloud, "Dieu me l'a donnée; gare à qui la touche," which expression became the legend of the Order of the Iron Crown, founded by the Emperor to commemorate the event. See Hazlitt, "Life of Napoleon," chap. xxxiv. See also Chambers, "Book of Days," i, 673. Napoleon died at Longwood on the island of St. Helena on May 5, 1821.

#### ON THE FEAR OF DEATH

This essay originally appeared as the last (No. XVII) of the second volume of "Table Talk" (1822).

**115 1 "And our little life"**: "The Tempest," IV, i, 156; a part of the famous passage on the monument to Shakspeare in Westminster Abbey.

**115 10 Bickerstaff**: see "On Periodical Essayists," p. 14.

**115 13 the Globe**: a favorite coffeehouse of Goldsmith, in Fleet Street. See Forster, "Life of Goldsmith," chap. xvii, p. 270. See also Timbs, "Clubs and Club Life in London," p. 404.

115 15 **Sterne brought out the volumes**: the first two volumes of "Tristram Shandy" appeared in 1760, the third and fourth in 1761, the fifth and sixth in 1762, the seventh and eighth in 1765, and the last in 1767.

115 26 "**gorge rises at**": "Hamlet," V, i, 206.

116 6 **perdus**: lost, invisible.

116 14 **stone aisles of that old Temple church**: Hazlitt refers to the nine monuments of Templars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, consisting of recumbent figures in full armor in the Temple Church in London.

116 18 **Holy War**: the wars of the Crusaders. It used to be thought that the crossing of the legs of the recumbent figures of knights in the churches, as in the Temple Church, was a sign that the knights buried beneath had taken part in the Crusades.

117 3 "**The wars we well remember**": "Faerie Queene," Book II, canto ix, stanza 56.

117 33 "**The present eye**": "Troilus and Cressida," III, iii, 180.

118 7 "**Oh! thou strong heart!**": Webster, "The White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona," V, iii, 96 (Mermaid edition).

118 29 **the downfall of the Bourbons**: the noble family of Bourbon from which so many European kings have sprung took its name from a district in France called Bourbonnais. The family dates from the ninth century.

118 32 **No young man ever thinks**: Hazlitt attributes this remark to his brother John, the painter.

119 6 "**This sensible warm motion**": "Measure for Measure," III, i, 120.

119 8 "**turn to withered, weak, and grey**": "Paradise Lost," XI, 540.

119 27 "**gone into the wastes of time**": Shakspeare, Sonnet XII:

That thou among the wastes of time must go.

119 note Young, "Night Thoughts," I, 424.

120 note Schiller's *Don Carlos* (1787): the Marquis, the impersonation of all that Schiller considers most noble in man, dies in the first scene of Act V.

121 7 *Zanetto, lascia*: Rousseau, "Confessions," Partie II, Livre VII (1743-1744).

121 15 **I have never seen death but once**: "Memoirs of William Hazlitt," I, 170. This refers to the first son of William Hazlitt, who was born January 15, 1809, and died on the fifth of July of the same year. Compare the passage in De Quincey's "Autobiography," describing his first sight of death. "Selections from De Quincey" (edited by Turk), pp. 6 seq.

**121 26 at my breast**: a paragraph which was in the manuscript of the essay is here omitted from the editions in Hazlitt's life-time:

I did not see my father after he was dead, but I saw Death shake him by the palsied hand and stare him in the face. He made as good an end as Falstaff; though different, as became him. After repeating the name of his R[edeemer] often, he took my mother's hand, and, looking up, put it in my sister's, and so expired. There was something graceful and gracious in his nature, which showed itself in his last act.

**121 27 Chantry's monument**: Sir Francis Chantry (1782-1841), distinguished English sculptor. The monument mentioned here is of two children asleep in each other's arms. It forms a monumental design in Lichfield Cathedral and is much admired.

**122 10 "Still from the tomb"**: Gray, "Elegy," ll. 91-92:

E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,  
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

**122 12 Tucker's *Light of Nature Pursued***: a miscellany, "The Light of Nature Followed" (1768-1778), by Abraham Tucker (1705-1774), published under the name of Edward Search. Hazlitt's abridgment of this book was published in 1807.

**123 32 "A little rule"**: Dyer, "Grongar Hill," ll. 89-92:

A little rule, a little sway,  
A sunbeam in a winter's day,  
Is all the proud and mighty have  
Betwixt the cradle and the grave.

**124 2 "A great man's memory"**: "Hamlet," III, ii, 139.

**125 4 Romeo runs his "seasick, weary bark"**: "Romeo and Juliet," V, iii, 118.

**125 16 as Pierre says**: Otway, "Venice Preserved," IV, ii:

And carry up and down this cursed city,  
A discontented and repining spirit,  
Burdensome to itself, a few years longer;  
To lose it, may be, at last in a lewd quarrel  
For some new friend, treacherous and false as thou art!

**125 34 Dr. Johnson was an instance**: Boswell gives us repeated examples of the fear of death, which Johnson seems to have had to an uncommon degree. See the following interesting references in Boswell's "Life" (edited by Birkbeck Hill), II, 106; III, 153, 295; IV, 253 (n. 4), 259, 278, 280, 289, 299-300, 366, 394, 399; V, 380. Rousseau said, "I am not afraid of death but I dread pain."

## ON LIVING TO ONE'S-SELF

This essay was written at Winterslow Hut, January 18 and 19, 1821, and first appeared as No. X in Vol. I of "Table Talk" (1821).

127 1 "Remote, unfriended": Goldsmith, "The Traveller," l. 1.

127 16 Winterslow: after their marriage Hazlitt and his wife went to Winterslow to live. Mrs. Hazlitt had inherited some cottages in this little village about seven miles from Salisbury on the Andover road. Here their first son, to be called William, was born January 15, 1809 and died the following July. After this misfortune the Hazlitts invited Charles and Mary Lamb, Martin Burney, and Colonel Phillips to Winterslow to spend a few weeks. The fourteenth of July was set for the visit, but on account of the illness of Mary Lamb, the trip was postponed until the following October. There were many pleasant days together, as we must suppose from the letters of Mary Lamb written at that time. In the July of the next year the Lambs again visited the Hazlitts at Winterslow and Hazlitt acted as guide to the Lambs to Oxford and Blenheim on their return to London. Charles Lamb has written of this in his "Oxford in the Vacation" ("Essays of Elia"). See also "Memoirs of Hazlitt," I, 168-175; also II, 229.

After 1819 Hazlitt spent much of his time at Winterslow Hut, where many of his essays were written ("Memoirs," II, 16); see Hazlitt, "On the Conversation of Authors," Works, VII, 24 ff.

The following selection is from the preface to "Winterslow: Essays and Characters Written there by William Hazlitt. Collected by his Son" (1850):

Winterslow is a village of Wiltshire, between Salisbury and Andover, where my father, during a considerable portion of his life, spent several months of each year, latterly, at an ancient inn on the great western road, called Winterslow Hut. One of his chief attractions hither were the noble woods of Tytherleigh or Tudorleigh, round Norman Court. . . . Another feature was Clarendon Wood—whence the noble family of Clarendon derived their title. . . . In another direction, within easy distance, gleams Stonehenge, visited by my father, less perhaps for its historical associations than for its appeal to the imagination. . . . At no great distance, in another direction, are the fine pictures of Lord Rednor and somewhat further those of Wilton House. But the chief happiness was the thorough quiet of the place, the sole interruption of which was the passage, to and fro, of the London mails. . . . Among these [some London friends], dearly loved and honoured there as everywhere else, Charles and Mary Lamb paid us frequent visits, rambling about all the time, thorough Londoners in a thoroughly country place, delighted and wondering and wondered at.

127 17 "While Heav'n's chancel-vault": Keats, "Hyperion," II, 36-38:

When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,  
In dull November, and their chancel-vault,  
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.

127 23 Lady G.: Lady Grandison in "Sir Charles Grandison," by Samuel Richardson.

129 16 "The man whose eye": Wordsworth, "Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree," ll. 55-59.

129 33 "To see the children": Wordsworth, "Intimations of Immortality," ll. 170-171.

130 6 Nicholson: William Nicholson (1753-1815), man of science and inventor. Besides his invention of many mathematical instruments, he wrote books on natural philosophy.

130 9 "never ending, still beginning": Dryden, "Alexander's Feast," l. 202.

130 11 "the witchery of the soft blue sky": Wordsworth, "Peter Bell," l. 265.

131 12 Goldsmith: "Hazlitt had probably read the story in Northcote's 'Life of Reynolds,' where the scene is laid at Antwerp. The incident really occurred at Lisle while Goldsmith was on his way to Paris with the Hornecks. We have Miss Horneck's authority for believing that the story as told by Northcote and here repeated by Hazlitt is much exaggerated. See Prior, 'Life of Goldsmith,' II, 290-291; Forster, 'Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith,' II, 217; Boswell, 'Life of Johnson' (edited by Hill), I, 414 and note." See Works, VI, 477-478.

131 17 I have seen a celebrated talker: was this Coleridge?

131 24 "Whose top to climb": "Cymbeline," III, iii, 47.

131 30 When Buonaparte got into his carriage: see Hazlitt, "Life of Napoleon," chaps. xliii and xlv.

132 7 "the insolence of office": "Hamlet," III, i, 73.

132 19 "after the heart-aches": *ibid.* III, i, 62.

132 29 "a mouse": Webster, "The Duchess of Malfi," IV, ii, p. 207 (Mermaid edition).

133 12 says Rousseau: see "La Nouvelle Héloïse," Partie V, Lettre III. This letter of Rousseau is especially interesting and seems to have been much liked by Hazlitt.

133 13 A country-gentleman near Taunton: Taunton is a few miles south of Bristol. Hazlitt had been in Bristol in 1798 on his visit to Coleridge and Wordsworth.

133 17 "Some demon whisper'd": Pope, "Moral Essays," IV, 16.  
The line in Pope is:

Some demon whisper'd. Visto! have a taste.

133 18 A little Wilson: a picture by Wilson, the painter (see above, p. 337).

133 22 Canaletti: Antonio Canale or Canaletto (1697-1768), the Venetian painter, or Bernardo Bellotto (1724?-1780), his nephew.

134 14 "virgined it e'er since": "Coriolanus," V, iii, 48.

134 15 Hogarth: William Hogarth (1697-1764), celebrated English painter and especially famous for his realistic pictures of eighteenth-century life and manners. Hogarth is often mentioned by Hazlitt (see Works, Vol. VIII; also Thackeray's "English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century").

134 15 Wilkie: Sir David Wilkie (1775-1814), Scottish genre painter. See Hazlitt's comparison of Hogarth and Wilkie in his "Comic Writers," Lecture VII, Works, Vol. VIII.

134 17 the Clandestine Marriage: a comedy by George Colman, the elder, and David Garrick. It was first produced in 1766.

134 30 "baby of a girl": "Macbeth," III, iv, 106.

134 33 "With what a waving air": B. W. Procter, "Mirandola," Act I, p. 20 (edition of 1821).

135 7 "The fly that sips": Gay, "The Beggar's Opera," II, ii. From one of Macheath's songs.

135 17 yet the tie is for life: Hazlitt's own experience does not seem quite consistent with this remark; but this essay was written before he had succeeded in untying it; his divorce was granted in 1822.

135 21 "Like life and death": Lamb, "John Woodvil," II, ii:

Better the dead were gather'd to the dead,  
Than death and life in disproportion meet.

135 24 "For either": "Paradise Lost," X, 898-908.

136 2 the madman in Don Quixote: conclusion of the story of the shepherdess Marcella: "This Chrysostome . . . loved well and was hated, he adored and was disdained, he begged pity of cruelty itself; he strove to move obdurate marble; pursued the winds; made his moans to solitary deserts," etc. (Part I, chap. xiii).

136 11 "I have not loved the world": Byron, "Childe Harold," canto iii, stanzas 113-114.

136 note Shenstone and Gray: "Gray says the same thing in a letter to Norton Nicholls, June 24, 1769 (Works, edited by Gosse, III, 344).

. . . As to Gray's dislike to having his portrait prefixed to his works, see his letter to Horace Walpole, January, 1753 (Works, edited by Gosse, II, 233)." See Works, VI, 478.

137 1 as Ben Jonson: examples of prologues where Jonson scolded his audience are those preceding "Volpone, the Fox" and "The Poetaster."

137 9 the man in the Hartz mountains: the well-known mirage of the Brocken. See De Quincey, "Spectre of the Brocken."

138 20 the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews: for an account of these magazines see introduction to L. E. Gates, "Selections from Francis Jeffrey," and Oliver Elton, "A Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830," I, 387 ff.

138 22 Taylor and Hessey: the publishers of "Characters of Shakespear's Plays" (1817). See E. V. Lucas, "Life of Charles Lamb," II, 36-37:

Taylor and Hessey had a fair name as publishers, having issued among other works the poems of Keats. . . . Not only through want of imagination, but also by a policy of penuriousness, Taylor in time ruined this most promising property. His partner, James Augustus Hessey (1785-1870), who had less part in Lamb's life, was the father of the late Archdeacon Hessey, for whom and his brother, when at school, Lamb once wrote epigrams. Keats called him "Mistessy."

The review appeared January, 1818. See Henley's introduction to Hazlitt (Works, Vol. I):

Both the *characters* and the *English Poets* [1818] were reviewed by Gifford in the *Quarterly*. The style of these "reviews" is abject; the inspiration venal; the matter the very dirt of the mind. Gifford hated Hazlitt for his politics, and set out to wither Hazlitt's repute as a man of letters. For the tremendous reprisal with which he was visited, the reader is referred to the *Letter to William Gifford, Esq.* If he finds it over-savage,—probably, being of to-day, he will,—let him turn to his *Quarterly*, and consider, if he have the stomach, Gifford and the matter of offence.

138 30 the *Cockney School*: according to the New English Dictionary, a cockney is one born in the city of London, or, as the old phrase was, "one born within the sound of Bow Bells." The term is particularly used to connote the characteristics in which the born Londoner is inferior to other Englishmen. The Cockney School was a nickname for a set of nineteenth-century writers belonging to London of whom Leigh Hunt was usually regarded as the best representative. See Lockhart's article on the subject in *Blackwoods*, October 28, 1817; see also Andrew Lang's "Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart."

139 1 Poor Keats: this is a reference to the opinion formerly widely prevalent that the untimely death of Keats was caused by the bitter

reviews of his poetry. The articles especially insulting were in *Blackwoods*, August, 1818, probably by Lockhart, and in the *Quarterly*, by J. W. Croker, for April, but not published till September, 1818.

139 3 "A bud bit": "Romeo and Juliet," I, i, 137-139.

139 10 "A huge-sized monster": "Troilus and Cressida," III, iii, 147:

A great-sized monster of ingratiitudes.

139 31 Bub Doddington: George Bubb Doddington (1691-1762). See "The Diary of the Late George Bubb Doddington, Baron of Melcombe Regis"; from March 8, 1748-1749, to February 6, 1761, now first published by Henry Penruddocke Wyndham (1784).

140 2 talk of the Scotch Novels: this essay was written in 1821; "Waverley," the first of Scott's novels, had appeared in 1814.

140 25 Bolingbroke's Reflections on Exile: this passage is taken from perhaps his most famous work. See Works, I, 107-108 (edition of 1754).

### ON THE PAST AND FUTURE

This essay first appeared in the first volume of "Table Talk" (1821).

142 8 When Sterne: "Sentimental Journey," Character — Versailles.

143 19 "Those joys are lodg'd": the source of this quotation is unknown.

144 12 "The thoughts of which": "Paradise Lost," IX, 912:

Yet loss of thee  
Would never from my heart.

144 20 "What though the radiance": Wordsworth, "Intimations of Immortality," ll. 179 seq. See Hazlitt's essay on Wordsworth in "Spirit of the Age," Works, IV, 270.

144 26 "retrace its footsteps": "Paradise Lost," XI, 329:

In yonder nether world where shall I seek  
Her bright appearance, or footsteps trace.

144 28 "And see how dark": Wordsworth's "Lines written while sailing in a Boat at Evening."

145 4 the last of the Reveries: these were written in 1775-1776. Lord Morley calls them the most perfect of Rousseau's compositions. Madame de Warens was the confidante of Rousseau. His first interview with her on the 21st of March, 1728, stamped itself forever on Rousseau's mind. When he says in the French sentence quoted by Hazlitt that it has been *fifty* years since he first saw Madame de Warens, a comparison will show that, strictly speaking, it was only about forty-eight.

145 19 "all the life of life was flown": Burns, "Lament for Glencairn":

For a' the life of life is dead.

145 22 lone brow of Norman Court: see "Memoirs," II, 14-15:

It was before his final settlement at Winterslow that he became in some manner acquainted with the Windhams of Norman Court, near Salisbury. It was the Honorable Charles Windham who lived there at that time with an only daughter, who was his heiress.

At one time Charles Windham offered to place at Hazlitt's disposal an apartment or two at Norman Court. This has been made very clear by Mr. Rees in *Notes and Queries*, tenth series, X, 63.

146 19 "running through the story": "Othello," I, iii, 175 ff.

147 14 *Posthæc meminisse juvabit*: Virgil, *Æneid*, I, 203.

148 20 "Calm contemplation": Wordsworth, "Laodamia," l. 72:

Calm pleasures there abide — majestic pains.

149 18 "catch glimpses": Wordsworth's Sonnet, "The World is too much with us":

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn.

149 22 "I also was an Arcadian": see p. 112 and note; see *Notes and Queries*, fourth series, I, 509, 561, &c.

To one of his poems Stevenson gave the title, "Et tu in Arcadia Vixisti."

149 26 *Que peu de chose*: Voltaire, "Letter to Madame du Deffand," October 13, 1759. Marquise du Deffand was a distinguished French woman of the eighteenth century, and friend of Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Horace Walpole.

149 32 *Respice finem*: a writer in *Notes and Queries*, fifth series, VI, 313, traces this Latin phrase back to a fable in "Fabulae Variorum Auctorum."

151 5 "the high endeavour": Cowper, "The Task," V, 901.

151 10 "Oh God! methinks": "3 Henry VI," II, v, 21 f.

152 10 "the tear forgot": Gray, "On a Distant Prospect of Eton College," stanza 5.

153 19 it is recorded by Spence: "Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters of Books and Men collected from the Conversation of Mr. Pope," by Joseph Spence (edition of 1858), pp. 87-88:

We almost always do better the second half hour than the first, because we grow warmer and warmer; to such a degree at last, that when I have improvise'd a whole evening, I can never get a wink of sleep all the night after.

## ON FAMILIAR STYLE

This was the twenty-fourth essay of "Table Talk."

In reading this essay and rereading it, one has the feeling that here are some of the best words ever written on the subject and written by a man who had thought of style and what it means. It is interesting to read in connection with this essay *The Genteel Style of Writing*, in Lamb's "The Last Essays of Elia."

**156** note **Marlow's** lines: Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), poet and dramatist.

**157** **18** **I never invented**: Hazlitt's style is remarkable for its purity of diction. Probably he never used more than a half dozen words about the purity of which there was any question, and in each of those cases he makes a careful note of his usage.

**158** **31** **Spanish pieces of eight**: the Spanish "dollar," or "piastre" (pieza de á ocho). Does one ever forget this coin after reading Stevenson's "Treasure Island"?

**159** **19** **Burton**: these are the seventeenth-century authors that Lamb seemed to like best and imitated. Hazlitt's comment on the quaint imitation is most apt. Compare what Lamb himself says about this peculiarity of his style in the preface to the "Last Essays."

**159** **24** **Elia**: Lamb's first Elia essay appeared in the *London Magazine* for August, 1820, with the title, "Recollections of the South-Sea House." The history of Lamb's pseudonym is told in a letter to John Taylor, the publisher, in July, 1821:

Having a brother now there [at the South-Sea House] and doubting how he might retort certain descriptions in it, clapt down the name of Elia to it, which passed off pretty well, for Elia himself added the function of an author to that of a scrivener, like myself. . . . I went the other day (not having seen him [Elia] for the year) to laugh over with him at my usurpation of his name, and found him alas! no more than a name, for he died of consumption eleven months ago and I knew not of it. So the name has fairly devolved to me, I think, and 't is all he has left me.

Mr. Lucas adds in a note:

Mrs. Cowden Clarke records in a marginal note to her copy of Procter's "Memoirs" (which was recently lent to me) that Lamb once remarked that "Elia" formed an anagram of "a lie."

See the account in Lucas, "Life of Lamb," II, 42 ff.

**159** **29** **"A well of native English"**: Spenser, "Faerie Queene," Book IV, canto ii, stanza 32:

Dan Chaucer, well of English undefyled,  
On Fame's eternall beadroll worthie to be fyled.

**159 32** *Erasmus's Colloquies*: Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536). His "Colloquia" (1524) are a series of dialogues written first for pupils and afterwards expanded into lively conversations on the topics of the day. In the sixteenth century these were read in the schools in England. See F. Seebohm, "Oxford Reformers."

**160 5** "What do you read?": "Hamlet," II, ii, 193.

**160 23** *Sermo humi obrepens*: Horace, "Epistles," II, i, 250-251:

Nec sermones ego malle  
Repentes per humum quam res componere gestas.

**161 1** *Ancient Pistol*: in Shakspeare's "Merry Wives," "Henry IV," and "Henry V."

**161 5** "That strut and fret": "Macbeth," V, v, 25.

**161 9** "And on their pens": Waller and Glover suggest as the source of this quotation, "Paradise Lost," IV, 988:

And on his crest  
Sat Horror plumed.

**162 27** "It smiled, and it was cold!": Cowper, "The Task," V, 173-176:

'T was transient in its nature, as in show  
'T was durable: as worthless as it seemed  
Intrinsically precious; to the foot  
Treacherous and false: it smiled, and it was cold.

### ON GOING A JOURNEY

This delightful essay was first published in the *New Monthly Magazine* for 1822 (IV, 73). The reader will instantly recall that more recent essay of Robert Louis Stevenson, "Walking Tours," which was evidently inspired by the Hazlitt essay. Compare also the spirit of Stevenson's essay, "An Apology for Idlers," with Hazlitt's passage on idlers at school, in *Works*, VI, 72. The sympathy between these two writers is noteworthy, as may be seen by a casual glance at some of the titles of their essays. Stevenson's plan to write a life of Hazlitt is apparent from a part of his letter to his friend, P. G. Hamerton:

I am in treaty with Bentley for a life of Hazlitt. I hope it will not fall through, as I love the object, and appear to have found a publisher who loves it also. That I think makes things more pleasant. You know I am a fervent Hazlittite, I mean regarding him as the English writer who has had the scantiest justice.

Besides which, I am anxious to write a biography; really if I understand myself in quest of profit, I think it must be good to live with another man from birth to death.—“Letters” (edited by Colvin), I, 225–226.

Why this project was not carried out is not known.

It is interesting also to find in Rousseau such enthusiastic praise of walking:

Never did I think so much, exist so much, be myself so much, as in the journeys I have made alone and on foot. The sight of the country, the succession of agreeable views, open air, good appetite, the freedom of the alehouse, the absence of everything that could make me feel dependence or recall me to my situation—all this sets my mind free, gives me greater boldness of thought. When I came to a place I only thought of eating, and when I left it I only thought of walking.—“Confessions,” IV, 279 ff.

163 5 “The fields his study”: Bloomfield, “The Farmer’s Boy,” *Spring*, 31.

163 14 “a friend in my retreat”: Cowper, “Retirement,” ll. 741–742.

163 22 “May plume her feathers”: Milton, “Comus,” ll. 378 ff.

163 27 in a Tilbury: a gig or two-wheeled carriage without a top. It was named for the inventor, a coach builder of the early nineteenth century.

164 8 *sunken wrack*: “Henry V,” I, ii, 165.

164 15 “leave me to my repose!”: the refrain of the Prophetess in Gray, “The Descent of Odin.” The line is quoted by Burke in “Letter to a Noble Lord” (Works, Bohn edition, V, 112):

If all revolutionists were not proof against all caution, I should recommend it to their consideration, that no persons were ever known in history, either sacred or profane, to vex the sepulchre, and by their sorceries to call up the prophetic dead, with any other event than the prediction of their own disastrous fate—“Leave me, oh leave me to repose.”

164 29 “Out upon such half-faced fellowship”: “I Henry IV,” I, iii, 208.

165 2 “Let me have a companion”: Stevenson, “Walking Tours.”

166 8 “give it an understanding”: “Hamlet,” I, ii, 250.

166 8 *My old friend C*—: Coleridge. See the essay, “My First Acquaintance with Poets,” p. 175; see also Introduction, p. xvi.

166 12 “He talked far above singing”: Beaumont and Fletcher, “Philaster,” V, 5:

I did hear you talk far above singing.

166 16 “that fine madness”: Drayton, “Censure of Poets”:

For that fine madness still he did retain,  
Which rightly should possess a Poet’s brain.

166 20 "Here be woods": "The Faithful Shepherdess" (1609), by John Fletcher (1579-1625), I, iii, 27-43.

167 8 L——: Lamb. See Hazlitt's splendid characterization of Lamb in "Spirit of the Age," Works, IV, 362 ff.

167 20 "take one's ease": "1 Henry IV," III, iii, 93:

*Falstaff*. Shall not I take mine ease in mine inn, but I shall have my pocket picked?

167 27 "The cups that cheer": Cowper, "The Task," IV, 39-40.

167 30 Sancho: Sancho Panza, "the round, selfish and self-important" squire of Don Quixote in Cervantes's romance of that name. The reference here is to "Don Quixote," Part II, chap. xlix.

168 1 *Procul*: this passage is quoted often by Hazlitt. The complete lines are:

"Procul o, procul este, profani,"

Conclamat vates, "totoque absistite luco." *Æneid*, VI, 258.

"Retire hence, retire, ye profane, and quit entirely the sacred grove."

This was the regular warning in religious ceremonies to the impure or uninitiated to keep aloof, lest the ceremony be defiled.

168 21 "unhoused free condition": "Othello," I, ii, 26.

168 23 "lord of one's self": Dryden, "To my Honour'd Kinsman, John Driden," l. 18:

Lord of your self, uncumber'd with a Wife.

169 10 *St. Neot's*: a town near Peterborough. It will be remembered that Hazlitt had walked into this part of the country some time near 1796. See "The Pictures at Burleigh House," Works, IX, 63. Also see Introduction, p. xv.

169 11 Gribelin's engravings of the Cartoons: in 1707 Gribelin completed a set of seven small plates of the cartoons of Raphael with a title-page composed of a sectional view of the apartment at Hampton Court in which they were then placed. This series met with great success.

169 13 Westall: Richard Westall (1765-1836), a prominent historical painter. Early in the nineteenth century he devoted himself chiefly to designs for illustration of editions of the English poets. His pictures in "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Don Quixote" are very much admired.

169 19 Paul and Virginia . . . at an inn at Bridgewater: "Paul et Virginie," by Bernardin de Saint Pierre (1737-1814), appeared in 1788. It was translated into English in 1796 by H. M. Williams.

169 22 Camilla: this novel by Fanny Burney was published in 1796. Though a literary failure, it enabled the author to build a cottage for herself, called Camilla Cottage.

169 23 *New Eloise* . . . at the inn at Llangollen: see the essay "My First Acquaintance with Poets," p. 186. Rousseau's "New Héloïse" was finished in 1759 and published early in 1761.

169 25 *St. Preux* describes his feelings: Rousseau, "La Nouvelle Héloïse," Partie IV, Lettre XVII.

169 34 "green upland swells": Coleridge, "Ode on the Departing Year," VII, 4-6.

170 13 "The beautiful is vanished": Coleridge, "The Death of Wallenstein," V, i.

171 12 "Beyond Hyde Park": "The Man of Mode" (1676), by Sir George Etherege (1635?-1691), Act V, scene ii, p. 361 (edited by Verity):

*Dormiant to Harriet.* Whate'er you say, I know all beyond Hyde Park's a desert to you, and that no gallantry can draw you further.

See also "On Londoners and Country People," Works, VII, 67.

171 12 *Sir Toppling Flutter*: should be *Sir Fopling Flutter*.

172 16 "The mind is its own place": "Paradise Lost," I, 254.

172 18 I once took a party: see Introduction, p. xxv; also "On the Conversation of Authors," Works, VII, 24-44; "Memoirs," I, 172; Lamb's "Letters," August 9, 1819; Lucas, "Life of Charles Lamb," I, 300.

172 21 "With glistening spires": "Paradise Lost," III, 550.

172 25 *Ciceroni*: this is the plural form for *cicerone*, the Italian word for "guide," so named on account of the proverbial talkativeness of those who describe the antiquities and curiosities of museums.

173 10 when I first set my foot: "Notes of a Journey through France and Italy," Works, IX, 302:

We returned by way of St. Omers and Calais. I wished to see Calais once more, for it was there I first landed in France twenty years ago.

This was the occasion of his going to Paris (October, 1802) to study at the Louvre.

173 33 *Dr. Johnson* remarked: Boswell's "Life" (edited by Hill), III, 301:

So it is in travelling, a man must carry knowledge with him, if he would bring home knowledge.

Also

Time may be employed to more advantage from nineteen to twenty-four almost in any way than in travelling; when you set travelling against mere negation, against doing nothing, it is better to be sure, but how much more would a young

man improve were he to study during those years. . . . How little does travelling supply to the conversation of any man who has travelled; how little to Beauclerk (Boswell's "Life" (edited by Hill), III, 352).

174 8 "Out of my country": at present no one has been able to identify this quotation.

### MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH POETS

The germ of this essay is "Mr. Coleridge's Lay-Sermon, to the editor of the *Examiner*," January 12, 1817. It was reprinted in "Political Essays" (1819). Then the essay, as we have it, was printed in Leigh Hunt's review "The Liberal: Verse and Prose from the South" (1823) and this was then republished by Hazlitt's son in "Literary Remains" (1836), II, 359-397. Our text is reprinted from "The Liberal" which is the form of the essay left by Hazlitt.

This essay has always been admired by readers of Hazlitt. For its account of the first great influence upon Hazlitt's literary life, and for its picture of Coleridge and Wordsworth at the very beginning of their poetic career, as well as for the enthusiasm of its style, it deserves a high place among the personal essays of our literature. In one of the best criticisms of Hazlitt, Professor Winchester has called it "the most delightful essay of personal reminiscence in the English language."

175 1 W——m: Wem, a village near Shrewsbury. See Introduction, pp. xii ff.

175 3 "dreaded name of Demogorgon": "Paradise Lost," II, 964-965.

175 18 "fluttering the *proud Salopians*": "Coriolanus," V, vi, 115:

That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I  
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli.

Shrewsbury is the chief town of Shropshire or Salop, from the old Latin name *Salopia*. Hence Hazlitt's name for the inhabitants of Shrewsbury.

175 23 "High-born Hoel's harp": Gray, "The Bard," l. 28.

176 6 "With Styx": Pope, "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day," ll. 90-91:

Tho' fate had fast bound her  
With Styx nine times round her.

Mr. Rowe was the Unitarian minister at Shrewsbury; later in the year he took the church at Bristol. Whitchurch is a small town about nine miles north of Wem, which is about ten miles from Shrewsbury.

176 21 the fires in the Agamemnon: used as the beacon in the play by Æschylus to announce the fall of Troy.

177 2 "*Il y a des impressions*": Rousseau, "Confessions":

There are impressions that neither times nor circumstances can efface. Were I enabled to live whole ages, the sweet days of my youth could not revive for me, nor ever be obliterated in my memory.

177 5 *When I got there*: the little church on High Street, Shrewsbury, is still used by the Unitarian congregation. Though altered both within and without, it retains the same pulpit and benches, though the backs of the pews have been cut down. On the wall at the rear of the pulpit is the decree of King George III affording protection to the worshippers. This was secured by the members after the outrages practiced upon Priestley. Charles Darwin was a member of this church.

177 7 *his text*: John vi, 15.

177 14 "*of one crying*": Matthew iii, 3-4.

177 26 "*as though he should never be old*": Sidney's "*Arcadia*," Lib. I.

177 32 "*Such were the notes*": Pope, "Epistle to Robert, Earl of Oxford," l. 1:

Such were the notes thy once-loved Poet sung,  
Till Death untimely stopp'd his tuneful tongue.

178 12 "*Like to that sanguine*": "*Lycidas*," l. 106.

178 25 "*As are the children*": Thomson, "*The Castle of Indolence*," II, stanza xxxiii.

178 28 "*A certain tender*": *ibid.* I, 57.

178 30 *Murillo* (1618-1682) and *Velasquez* (1599-1660): both were celebrated Spanish painters.

179 16 *Coleridge* was at that time (1798): for independence of his views Coleridge had been expelled from Cambridge and had entered a regiment of dragoons. Encouraged by the Captain, who had found him reading Plato in Greek, Coleridge left the army and entered into the scheme of the Pantisocracy. When this plan failed, the young enthusiast began a series of meetings in various English cities for the purpose of disseminating his views on politics and religion. In that capacity he had become well known, and it is not strange that the people at Shrewsbury eagerly awaited his coming.

179 19 *poor Irish lad*: Hazlitt's father had been born in Tipperary County, Ireland; he was sent to Glasgow at the age of nineteen (1756) where he studied under Adam Smith (1723-1790), the celebrated Scottish political economist. For an account of the life of Hazlitt's father, see W. C. Hazlitt, "*Four Generations of a Literary Family*."

**181 9 Mary Wolstonecraft** (1759-1797): wife of William Godwin and mother of the second wife of Shelley. She was the author of the "Vindication of the Rights of Women" (1792).

**181 10 Mackintosh**: Sir James Mackintosh (1765-1832), philosopher and historian. In 1791 he published "Vindiciae Gallicae" in answer to Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France." See Hazlitt's essay in the "Spirit of the Age," Works, IV, 279.

**182 24 making him an offer**: Coleridge preached at Shrewsbury on Sunday, January 14, 1789. On the 10th, Josiah Wedgwood had written: "After what my brother Thomas has written I have only to state the proposal we wish to make to you. It is that you shall accept an annuity for life of £150 to be regularly paid by us, no condition whatsoever being annexed to it." See Mrs. Henry Sandford, "Thomas Poole and His Friends," I, 236-238; also R. B. Witchfield, "Life of Tom Wedgwood" (1903).

This letter reached Stowey (Coleridge's home) on Saturday the 13th, when Coleridge was on his way to Shrewsbury. Tom Poole took charge of the letter and forwarded it or sent word of its contents. Coleridge decided to accept the gift, and on the 30th wrote to Thelwall, "Astonished, agitated and feeling as I could not help feeling, I accepted the offer in the same worthy spirit in which it was made." On his return from Shrewsbury he went to Tom Poole's house to meet Tom Wedgwood "to make his personal acknowledgments of the offer of the annuity which he had just made up his mind to accept."

**182 30 Deva**: the ancient Latin name for the Dee, a river of North Wales which flows past Chester into the Irish Sea.

**183 3 Shepherd on the Delectable Mountains**: in "Pilgrim's Progress" Christian and Hopeful come to the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains immediately after they have escaped from Giant Despair.

**183 13 Cassandra**: in "Cassandre" by La Calprenède. "I confess I have read some of these fabulous folios formerly with no small degree of delight and breathless anxiety, particularly that of 'Cassandra.'" Works, XII, 61.

**183 21 "Sounding on his way"**: Chaucer's description of the Merchant, "Prologue," l. 275.

**183 34 Hume . . . Essay on Miracles**: David Hume (1711-1776), the famous Scottish philosopher and historian, known chiefly as the expounder of skeptical views in philosophy. His great work, "Treatise on Human Nature," was published, Vols. I and II in 1739, Vol. III in 1740.

**184 1 South's Sermons**: Robert South (1634-1716), the noted English divine who began a controversy on the Trinity, which aroused such bitterness that the king intervened.

184 2 *Credat Judæus Apella*: Horace, "Satires," I, v, 100:

Credat Iudæus Apella,  
Non ego.

Let the Jew Apella believe it, I will not.

See *Notes and Queries*, ninth series, III, 326; VII, 240.

184 10 *Essay on Vision*: by George Berkeley (1685-1753), Irish bishop. His "Essay on Vision" was published in 1709; "Theory of Matter and Spirit" in 1733. The aim of Berkeley throughout his writings is to attack materialism, and he is therefore opposed to Hobbes.

184 14 "Thus I confute him": Boswell, "Life" (edited by Hill), I, 471.

184 16 *Tom Paine*: Thomas Paine (1737-1809), Anglo-American political writer and freethinker. He supported the cause of the American Colonies and published "Rights of Man" in 1791-1792. For this he was outlawed from England.

184 20 *Bishop Butler*: Joseph Butler (1692-1752), English theologian, bishop of Bristol and of Durham. His most famous work was "The Analogy of Religion" (1736). "Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel" (1726) is referred to in this passage.

184 32 *Natural Disinterestedness*: printed by Hazlitt in 1805, though he had been thinking it over for years.

185 16 *Sidney*: besides Sidney's prose, it will be remembered that he wrote the famous sonnet sequence, "Astrophel and Stella" (1591).

185 21 *Paley*: William Paley (1743-1805), English theologian and philosopher.

185 29 "Kind and affable": "Paradise Lost," VIII, 648-650.

186 5 he has somewhere told himself: "Biographia Literaria," chap. x.

186 13 that other *Vision of Judgment*: see an account in the *Edinburgh Review*, June, 1822:

This was by Byron, published in the first number of Leigh Hunt's *Liberal*. The Bridge-Street Association, or Gang as it was called by its enemies, was founded in 1821 to support the laws for suppressing seditious publications and for defending the country from the fatal influence of disloyalty and sedition.

186 32 *Llangollen Vale*: in Wales, about thirty-six miles from Wem.

186 34 *Ode on the Departing Year*: this poem was composed in December 23-26, 1796. It appeared in an abridged form on December 31, and later complete in a quarto text.

187 7 thought of *Tom Jones*: "Tom Jones," Book X, chap. v. This was one of Hazlitt's favorite books.

187 9 at *Tewkesbury*: according to his essay, "On Going a Journey," it was at Bridgewater. See p. 169.

187 10 **Paul and Virginia**: this story had appeared in 1788.

187 22 *Poems on the Naming of Places*: these are seven poems by Wordsworth, written about Grasmere, Keswick, and people and places near by.

188 5 **I saw it but the other day**: probably on one of his excursions out of Salisbury, while he was living and writing at Winterslow.

188 8 **Coleridge took me over**: that is, from Nether Stowey to Alfoxden.

188 10 **a friend of the poet's**: in 1797 Wordsworth had moved to Alfoxden, a "large mansion in a large park with seventy head of deer." Hazlitt is mistaken. Wordsworth paid £23 a year for Alfoxden. See Mrs. Sandford, "Thomas Poole and his Friends," I, 225. Early in that year Coleridge had moved to Nether Stowey in Somersetshire. In June at the little village of Racedown, Dorsetshire, Coleridge visited Wordsworth. In July the Wordsworths returned the visit and in August they took the neighboring country house of Alfoxden.

188 17 the *Lyrical Ballads*: these famous poems appeared in the autumn of 1798, before Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Dorothy Wordsworth left for Germany on the sixteenth of September. In 1817 Coleridge reissued his poems already published, with the title "Sibylline Leaves."

188 25 "**hear the loud stag speak**": no one has thus far succeeded in pointing out the source of this quotation.

189 17 "**In spite of pride**": Pope, "Essay on Man," I, 293.

189 22 "**While yet**": Thomson, "The Seasons," *Spring*, 18.

189 25 "**Of Providence**": "Paradise Lost," II, 559-560.

190 21 **Chantry's bust**: this was executed before 1821 and is now at Coleorton.

190 23 **Haydon's head of him**: a portrait by Haydon introduced into his "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem." This picture is now in the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Cincinnati.

190 33 the *Castle Spectre*: by "Monk" Lewis (1775-1818); this play had been produced at Drury Lane, December 14, 1797. Wordsworth saw it in the following spring.

191 1 *ad captandum* merit: a quality for catching popular applause.

191 14 "**his face was as a book**": "Macbeth," I, v, 63.

191 34 **Tom Poole**: Thomas Poole (1765-1837) was a Bristol tanner who has become famous for his kindness to authors, especially Coleridge and Wordsworth. A delightful biography has been written by his daughter, Mrs. Henry Sandford, "Thomas Poole and his Friends," 2 vols. (1888).

192 8 "**followed in the chace**": "Othello," II, iii, 370.

192 19 **followed Coleridge into Germany**: after the publication of the "Lyrical Ballads," Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Dorothy Wordsworth

went to Germany in September of the same year, 1798. To all, this was a most important event.

**192 22 Sir Walter Scott's:** Hazlitt probably refers to the banquet given to George IV by the magistrates of Edinburgh, August 24, 1822.

**192 22 Mr. Blackwood's:** William Blackwood (1776-1834), Scotch publisher and bookseller, founder and editor of Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine*, April 1, 1817.

**192 28 Gasper Poussin** (1613-1675): French landscape painter, brother-in-law and pupil of Nicolas Poussin.

**192 28 Domenichino:** or Domenico Zampieri (1581-1641), noted Italian painter, famous for the correctness of his design.

**193 19 Giant's Causeway:** the celebrated rock formation on the north coast of Ireland.

**193 26 Death of Abel:** by Solomon Gessner (1730-1788), who was a Swiss idyllic poet and landscape painter. His best-known piece is "Tod Abels" (1758), a prose idyl.

**193 34 Seasons:** "The Seasons," by James Thomson, appeared 1726-1730. See Hazlitt's criticism on Thomson and Cowper, "Lectures on English Poets," Lecture V, Works, V, 85.

**194 27 Caleb Williams:** famous political novel by William Godwin (1756-1836), published in 1794. Godwin was one of the important men of his time and associated with all the chief writers, especially Hazlitt, Lamb, the Hunts, Shelley. See Hazlitt's essay in the "Spirit of the Age," Works, IV, 200. See also C. Kegan Paul, "William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries" (1876).

**194 note Buffamacco:** Buonamico Buffalmacco (1311-1351), Florentine painter, celebrated for his jests in Boccaccio's "Decameron." See Vasari, "Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects."

**195 2 "ribbed sea-sands":** "Ancient Mariner," ll. 224-227:

I fear thee, ancient Mariner!  
I fear thy skinny hand  
And thou art long and lank, and brown,  
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

In a note Coleridge says, "For the last two lines of this stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth."

**195 34 Remorse:** this play was produced at Drury Lane, January 23, 1813, and was fairly successful. It ran for twenty nights. For his share Coleridge received £400.

**196 1 Mr. Elliston:** Robert William Elliston (1774-1831). He was a favorite actor of Lamb's and played the title part in Lamb's farce

"Mr. II.," which failed on December 10, 1806. See Lamb's Elia essay called "Ellistoniana."

196 11 It was at Godwin's: the meeting between Hazlitt and Lamb took place probably in the early months of 1804 and was brought about by Coleridge. See Lucas, "Life of Lamb," I, 341.

196 12 Holcroft: Thomas Holcroft (1745-1809), English dramatist, miscellaneous writer, and actor. Because he embraced the principles of the French Revolution he was indicted for high treason and imprisoned for a short time. Hazlitt wrote a life of him. See Works, II, 1-281.

196 17 "But there is matter": Wordsworth, "Hart-Leap Well," ll. 95-96:

But there is matter for a second rhyme,  
And I to this would add another tale.

### MERRY ENGLAND

This essay first appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* for December, 1825; it was published in "Sketches and Essays" (1839).

197 1 "St. George for merry England": St. George was recognized as the patron saint of England from the time of Edward III (1327-1377), probably because of his being adopted as patron of the Order of the Garter. The phrase "merry England" appears in "Cursor Mundi," 1300-1400; also in "A Lytell Geste of Robin Hood." See *Notes and Queries*, tenth series, X, 88.

197 3 *Ut lucus*: the phrase is *lucus a non lucendo*, "a light from its not shining." The phrase is used to mark an absurd or discordant etymology. *Lucus*, "a grove," is derived from *lucere*, "to shine," because the rays of the sun are supposed rarely to shine through its foliage.

197 24 *Silence*: "2 Henry IV," V, iii, 42.

197 28 "there were pippins": "Merry Wives," I, ii, 12.

198 4 "Continents have most": Hobbes, "Human Nature," Works (edited by Molesworth), IV, 50.

198 26 "They," says Froissart: also quoted in "The Round Table." See Works, I, 431. This well-known saying is wrongly attributed to Froissart. See *Notes and Queries* for 1863 and subsequent years.

199 6 Blindman's-buff: see Strutt, "Sports and Pastimes" (edited by Hone, 1838), p. 392.

199 6 hunt-the-slipper: *ibid.* p. 387.

199 7 hot-cockles: *ibid.* p. 393.

From the French *hautes-coquilles*, a play in which one kneels, and covering his eyes lays his head in another's lap and guesses who struck him.

The New English Dictionary refuses to accept this derivation of the word, but suggests no other.

**199 7 snap-dragon :** *ibid.* p. 397.

**199 21 Drury-lane or Covent-garden :** the first theater of which we have record in Drury Lane was The Cockpit, where, in the days of the Commonwealth, actors attempted surreptitiously to give plays. Then a more convenient building was erected in the same street and opened April 8, 1663. In January, 1671-1672, this theater took fire and was entirely destroyed. The new theater, under the direction of Sir Christopher Wren, was built and opened March 26, 1674. In 1791 it was taken down so that a more commodious building might be erected on the same site. This new theater was opened on the twelfth of March, 1794. It was destroyed by fire on February 24, 1809. . . . The incident is well known of Sheridan, its manager, refusing to postpone a debate in the House of Commons when the fire was discovered. The new theater was reopened in October, 1812.

The Covent Garden Theater was opened for its first play on October 2, 1732. It was burned on September 20, 1808. The corner stone of the new building was laid with great ceremony by the Prince of Wales on December 31 of the same year. For a sketch of these two theaters in the eighteenth century, see introduction to Baker's "Biographia Dramatica" (1812). It is no exaggeration to say that the history of these two theaters from the Restoration to the nineteenth century, with the account of their managers and actors, is the story of dramatic production in England during that time. See also Colley Cibber's "Apology" (1740).

**199 33 Jack-o'-the-Green :** Strutt, p. 358 :

The Jack in the Green is a piece of pageantry consisting of a hollow frame of wood or wicker-work, made in the form of a sugar loaf, but open at the bottom and sufficiently large and high to receive a man. The frame is covered with green leaves and bunches of flowers interwoven with each other, so that the man within may be completely concealed, who dances with his companions, and the populace are mightily pleased with the oddity of the moving pyramid.

**200 6 "Long Robinson" . . . Old Lord's :** Lord's is the famous cricket ground in England. A few years ago when it was proposed to build a tram line through the ground, a peer in Parliament in outspoken opposition exclaimed, "Lord's is one of the most sacred spots in England." In 1787 the first Lord's ground was laid off on the site of what is now Dorset Square ; it was again moved in 1811, and to the present place in 1814, in St. John's Wood, London. It took the name from Thomas Lord, a prominent cricketer and keeper of grounds in the eighteenth century.

**200 24 the joy of the ring :** see Hazlitt's famous essay, "The Fight," Works, XII, 1.

**200** note "passage of arms at Ashby": see Scott, "Ivanhoe," chaps. vii and viii.

**201 7** "A cry more tuneable": "Midsummer Night's Dream," IV, 1, 121. Note that the word "tuneable" here means *musical*.

**201 17** Theseus and Pirithous: two close friends famous in classic mythology. With the assistance of Pirithous, Theseus carried off Helen from Sparta. Then in the attempt of Pirithous to take away Proserpine, Pluto seized them both and fastened them to a rock.

**201 24** "brothers of the angle": Walton, "Compleat Angler," Part I, chap. i. Elsewhere Hazlitt writes:

Perhaps the best pastoral in the language is that prose-poem, Walton's *Compleat Angler*.

See Works, V, 98-99; see also essay, "On Egotism," Works, VII, 161.

**201** note This was the reason the French: see Hazlitt's account of the battle of Waterloo in his "Life of Napoleon," chap. lvi.

**202 29** Will Wimble: see "On Periodical Essayists," p. 18.

**202 31** The *Cockney* character: see above, p. 355.

**203 16** Book of Sports: "The King's Maiesties Declaration to his Subjects concerning lawfull Sports to be used," published by James I in 1618 and reissued by his son in 1633.

**203 21** "And e'en on Sunday": Burns, "Tam O'Shanter," ll. 27-28.

**203 29** Bartholomew-Fair: this was a fair or market held at West Smithfield, London, on St. Bartholomew's Day (24 August O.S.). It continued from 1133 till 1855 when it was discontinued. For a full and interesting account of the Fair see H. Morley, "Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair." In his play of the same name, Ben Jonson has many a gibe at the Puritans of his day.

**204 7** Gilray's shop-window: Miss Humphrey's shop, 29 St. James's Street, where the works of James Gilray (1757-1815), the caricaturist, were on view. In the first number of the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, August 1, 1798, appeared a cartoon of Gilray, which became very famous. The picture shows a group of prominent English revolutionists — Duke of Bedford, Coleridge, Southey, Lloyd, and Lamb, the last two represented by a toad and a frog. See Lucas, "Life of Charles Lamb," I, 136.

**204** note Shrovetide: Shrove Tuesday, the last day before Lent, a great time for sports of all kinds.

**206 8** Byron was in the habit: see "Byron's Letters and Journals" (edited by Prothero), V, 528, 533-535, 559 ff.

**206 20** "That under Heaven": "Faerie Queene," Book I, canto vii, stanza 32.

**207 9 Childe Harold**: the first two cantos of "Childe Harold" were published in 1812, the third in 1816, the fourth in 1818. "Don Juan," cantos i and ii in 1819; iii-v in 1821; vi-xiv in 1823; xv, xvi in 1824.

**208 2 Lubin Log or Tony Lumpkin**: Tony Lumpkin in Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer"; Lubin Log in "Love, Law and Physic," by James Kenney (1780-1849).

**208 20 ff. Mrs. Jordan**: Mrs. Jordan was the assumed name of Dorothy Bland (1762-1862), an Irish actress, distinguished for her Rosalind and Viola. Thomas King (1730-1805). John Bannister (1760-1836) was a pupil of David Garrick. His retirement from the stage at Drury Lane was described by Hazlitt in the *Examiner*, June 4, 1815, Works, VIII, 229. Richard Suett (1755-1805) had a part in the first play which Hazlitt ever saw (Introduction, pp. xiv and xlv). Joseph Munden (1758-1832). Charles Lamb called him the king of broad comedy. James William Dodd (1730-1805), William Parsons (1736-1795), John Emery (1777-1822), Elizabeth Farren (1759?-1829).

**208 27 ff. Nell, &c.**: Nell in "The Devil to Pay, or The Wives Metamorphosed," by Coffey, a part taken by Mrs. Jordan; Little Pickle in "The Spoiled Child"; Touchstone in "As You Like It"; Sir Peter Teazle in "School for Scandal," by Sheridan; Lenitive in "The Prize," by Prince Hoare; Lingo in "The Agreeable Surprise," by O'Keefe; Crabtree in "School for Scandal," by Sheridan; Nipperkin in "Sprigs of Laurel"; Dornton in "The Road to Ruin," a comedy in five acts by Thomas Holcroft; Ranger in "The Suspicious Husband" (1747), by Hoadly; Copper Captain in "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife," by Fletcher; Lord Sands in Shakspeare's "King Henry VIII"; Filch in Gay's "Beggars' Opera"; Moses in "School for Scandal"; Acres in Sheridan's "The Rivals"; Elbow in Shakspeare's "Measure for Measure"; Hodge in "Love in a Village" (1763), a comic opera by Isaac Bickerstaff; Flora in "The Wonder," by Mrs. Centlivre; Duenna in "Duenna" (1775), a three-act comic opera by Sheridan; Lady Teazle in "School for Scandal"; Lady Grace in "The Provoked Husband, or A Journey to London," by Vanbrugh and Cibber.

**209 9 Roderick Random**: Smollett's first story (1748).

**209 10 Hogarth's prints**: see Hazlitt's essay on that subject in Works, I, 25.

**209 16 "What's our Britain"**: "Cymbeline," III, iv, 138:

I' the world's volume  
Our Britain seems as of it, but not in 't;  
In a great pool, a swan's nest, prithee, think  
There's livers out of Britain.

**209 22 Mrs. Abington**: Frances Abington (1737-1815), flower seller, street singer, cook maid, and comedy queen. Hazlitt wrote:

I would rather have seen Mrs. Abington's Millamant than any Rosalind that ever appeared on the stage.

See "Lectures on Comic Writers," Works, VIII, 74.

**209 22 Mademoiselle Mars**: Anne Françoise Boutet-Monvel (1779-1847), the clever impersonator of Molière's heroines at the Théâtre Français. Her father, Montet, was an actor, and her mother, Mars, an actress.

**210 7 As I write this**: this paper was written apparently at Vevey in the summer of 1825. See "Memoirs," Vol. II, chap. xv. See also Works, IX, 281.

**210 13 "And gaudy butterflies"**: from one of Polly's songs in "The Beggar's Opera," Act I, scene 1.

#### OF PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO HAVE SEEN

This essay appeared first in the *New Monthly Magazine* for January, 1826; it was republished in "Literary Remains" (1836) and in "Winterslow" (1850).

This essay should be read in connection with the two in "The Plain Speaker," "On the Conversation of Authors."

My attention has been called by Mr. J. Rogers Rees of Salisbury, England, to what is certainly the source of the idea of this paper. In 1768 there appeared a work by Abraham Tucker, "The Light of Nature Pursued by Edward Search." In 1807 Hazlitt published an abridgment of this very popular work. The twenty-third chapter of Vol. II had the heading, "The Vision," and began as follows:

One day after having my thoughts intent all the morning upon the subject of the two foregoing chapters, I went out in the evening to a neighbor's house to recreate myself with a game at cards. . . . And every one fell to consider how he might best gratify his curiosity, if he were possessed of that art [necromancy], what persons he should wake from the shades and what questions he should put to them.

Then are summoned the shades of Locke, Newton, and others mentioned by Hazlitt in his delightful essay.

**212 1. "Come like shadows"**: "Macbeth," IV, i, III.

**212 2 B**—: Charles Lamb. This essay attempts to describe a conversation which took place at one of Lamb's "Wednesdays" at 16 Mitre Court Buildings, where Charles Lamb and his sister Mary lived

from 1801 to 1809. Though Hazlitt says this discussion took place "twenty years ago," which would be about 1806, Mr. Lucas thinks it may have been as late as 1814. See his "Life of Lamb," I, 380.

**212 3 Guy Faux:** Guy Fawkes (1570-1606). See Hazlitt's excellent articles on him, Works, XI, 317-334; three papers that appeared in the *Examiner*, November 11, 18, 25, 1821. The unsuccessful attempt of Fawkes to set fire to the House of Parliament (November 5, 1605) started the celebration which is observed every year. In every town and village of England Fawkes is burned in effigy. The festivities of the day resemble those of the Fourth of July in America.

**212 7 "Never so sure our rapture":** Pope, "Moral Essays," II, 51.

**212 17 A — :** William Ayrton (1777-1858), the musician and musical critic, director of music at King's Theater and editor of Charles Knight's Musical Library. Hazlitt called him "the Will Honeycomb of our set." He was a friend of the Burneys. See Lucas, "Life of Lamb," I, 237 ff.

**213 8 Kneller's portraits:** the portrait of Newton is at Kade, and his best portrait of Locke is at Christ College, Oxford.

**213 21 Sir Thomas Brown (1605-1682):** one of Charles Lamb's favorite writers, author of "Religio Medici" (1642) and "Hydriotaphia or Urn Burial" (1658). See the letter, probably by Mitford, quoted in Lucas, "Life of Lamb," II, 168.

**213 21 Fulke Greville (1554-1628):** first Lord Brooke. He was a poet and friend of Queen Elizabeth and of Sir Philip Sidney whose life he wrote. He held important positions, including that of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Hazlitt often mentions him in his works.

**214 8 "And call up him who left half-told":** "Il Penseroso," ll. 109-110.

**214 28 Dr. Donne:** John Donne (1573-1631), one of the so-called metaphysical poets, to whom we are largely indebted for the use of conceits in the seventeenth century. See the edition of his poems by E. K. Chambers in the Muses Library.

**214 33 beauty of the portrait:** see note on p. 276, Vol. I, "Memoirs of Hazlitt":

It was probably the edition of 1669, 12 mo; at least that was the one Lamb had. There were in it many notes by Coleridge, and this memorandum: "I shall die soon, my dear Charles Lamb, and then you will not be vexed that I have bescribbled your book."—S. T. C. 2d May, 1811.

**215 3 "Here lies a She-Sun":** "An Epithalamion on Frederick Count Palatine of the Rhine and the Lady Elizabeth being married on St. Valentine's Day," stanza vii.

**215 8 "Lines to his Mistress":** Donne's poem entitled "Refusal to allow his Young Wife to accompany him abroad as a Page."

**216 23 Temple-walk in which Chaucer:** Chaucer as Clerk of King's Works at Westminster. See Skeat, "Works of Chaucer," I, xxxix.

**216 34 "lisp'd in numbers":** Pope, "Prologue to Satires," l. 128.

**217 4 interview with Petrarch:** an editorial footnote appears in the *New Monthly Magazine*: "Query, did they ever meet?" Even to-day no one is quite sure of the answer. If they did meet, it was on the occasion of Chaucer's visit to Italy in 1372-1373. For a discussion of this question, see Skeat, "Chaucer," I, xxv; Lounsbury, "Studies in Chaucer," I, 67 ff.

**217 6 the author of the Decameron:** Giovanni Boccaccio, Italian novelist (1313-1375).

**217 8 Squire's Tale:** the story of the falcon in "The Decameron," fifth day, ninth story; the story of Friar Albert, *ibid.* fourth day, second story, etc.

**217 14 Cadmuses:** a reference to the legend of the killing of the dragon by Cadmus and, on the advice of Athena, his sowing the teeth, out of which armed men grew up. Also Cadmus is said to have introduced into Greece from Phoenicia or Egypt an alphabet of sixteen letters.

**217 20 a fine portrait of Ariosto:** See Works, XII, 424. Note by Waller and Glover:

Hazlitt probably refers to the Portrait of a Poet in the National Gallery, now ascribed to Palma. Titian's portrait of Aretine is in the Pitti Gallery.

**217 34 "creature of the element":** "Comus," ll. 299-301.

**218 5 "That was Arion crowned":** "Faerie Queene," Book IV, canto xi, stanza 23.

**218 7 Captain C.:** Captain James Burney, son of Dr. Burney, brother of Fanny Burney, the writer, and a very intimate friend of the Lambs. M. C. was Martin Burney, son of Captain Burney, or, as he came to be, Rear Admiral Burney. He was a member of the party that visited the Hazlitts at Winterslow (see Introduction, p. xxiv).

**218 8 the Wandering Jew:** the legend is that Christ, bearing his cross to Calvary, asked to rest at the stall of a shoemaker. The latter struck him and bade him go on. As a punishment he was never to die, but was to walk the earth till the Judgment Day. Eugène Sue has treated the story in his novel, "Le Juif errant."

**218 10 Pope talking with Patty Blount:** Martha Blount (1690-1762) was a friend of Pope. To her Pope left most of his possessions when he died.

**218 10 Miss D—**: Mrs. Reynolds. See "Literary Remains," II, 342. This was the lady who had been Lamb's schoolmistress. Her maiden name was Chambers, possibly "prim Betsy Chambers" of Lamb's "Gone or Going." See Lucas, "Life of Lamb," I, 38; also 380 ff.

**218 17 Scotland with the Pretender**: the French victory at Fontenoy, May 31, 1745, encouraged Charles Edward Stuart and the Jacobites in Scotland to push forward. This movement resulted in the battle at Culloden Moor, January 23, 1746. See Boswell, "Johnson" (edited by Hill), I, 176 ff.

**219 3 Lord Cornbury**: Henry Hyde (1710-1753), friend of Bolingbroke and Lady Montagu.

**219 5 "Despise low joys"**: "Imitations of Horace," Book I, epistle vi, ll. 60-61.

**219 9 Lord Mansfield** (1733-1821): Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas.

**219 12 "Conspicuous scene"**: *ibid.* ll. 50-53.

**219 18 "Why rail they then"**: "Epilogue to Satires," Dialogue II, ll. 138-139.

**219 22 "But why then publish"**: "Prologue to Satires," ll. 135-146.

**220 14 Gay's verses to him**: "Mr. Pope's Welcome from Greece. A Copy of Verses written by Mr. Gay upon Mr. Pope's having finished his Translation of Homer's Iliad." See Gay's Poems (edited by Underhill), I, 207.

**220 21 E—**: Erasmus Phillips; this name is given in "Literary Remains," II, 346. If this is correct, it was the Phillips who was a very intimate friend of the Burneys. This may be the one who with Martin Burney and the Lambs visited the Hazlitts at Winterslow.

**221 9 "nigh-sphered in Heaven"**: Collins, "Ode on the Poetical Character," l. 66.

**221 13 J. F—**: Barron Field (1786-1846). See "Literary Remains," II, 347. He was a lawyer and miscellaneous writer. He was the friend with initials "B. F." who accompanied Charles and Mary Lamb to Hertfordshire. See "Essays of Elia."

**221 16 Wildair**: "Sir Harry Wildair" (1701), by George Farquhar.

**221 16 Abel Druggar**: in Ben Jonson's "Alchemist" (1610).

**221 21 Barry, and Quin**: actors, rivals of Garrick.

**221 21 Shuter**: comic actor of the same time.

**221 21 Weston**: Thomas Weston (1737-1776), one of the best comedians of his time.

**221 22 Mrs. Clive**: called Kitty Clive, in comedy.

**221 22 Mrs. Pritchard**: famous as Lady Macbeth.

222 2 *æstus*: the genuine fire of the actor.

222 8 suddenly missed Garrick: many such anecdotes are told of Garrick. See Percy Fitzgerald, "David Garrick" (edition of 1899), pp. 215 ff.

222 15 Roscius: friend of Cicero and greatest comic actor of Rome.

222 23 Mustapha and Alaham: both are tragedies by Fulke Greville (Lord Brooke).

222 25 Kit Marlowe: the familiar name of Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593).

222 25 the sexton of St. Ann's: Hazlitt is buried in St. Anne's Church, Soho, London.

223 4 G——: William Godwin. See "Literary Remains," II, 350.

223 5 his romantic visit to Drummond: between September, 1618, and January 19, 1619, Ben Jonson went to visit the poet Drummond of Hawthornden. The notes which Drummond made of their talk form the main source of the biography of Jonson. See "Conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden" (edited by Laing).

223 8 Eugene Aram (1704-1759): he was hanged for the murder of Daniel Clark. He was a great scholar and was the source of the highly idealized portrait in Bulwer Lytton's novel of the same name (1832).

223 9 "Admirable Crichton": James Crichton (1560-1585?), surnamed The Admirable, or the Wonderful, by Sir Thomas Urquhart in 1652. He was a remarkable writer and scholar. Mr. J. M. Barrie has written a delightful play about him.

223 15 H——: Leigh Hunt. See "Literary Remains," II, 355.

223 22 Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): American theologian and philosopher, author of "Freedom of the Will" (1754).

224 18 Dugald Stewart (1753-1828): distinguished Scottish philosopher.

224 9 J——: J has not been identified.

224 11 Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus: both scholastic philosophers, the former of the thirteenth and the latter of the ninth century.

224 21 Duchess of Bolton: Lavinia Fenton (1708-1760) played first the part of Polly in Gay's "Beggar's Opera" (1728).

224 22 Steele and Addison: Captain Sentry in "Spectator," No. 2.

224 25 Otway and Chatterton: Thomas Otway (1652-1685), poet and tragic dramatist. Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770), the boy poet, author of "The Rowley Poems."

224 27 Thomson fell asleep: James Thomson (1700-1748), author of "The Seasons," was proverbially indolent.

224 29 John Barleycorn: Barleycorn is personification of malt liquor as made from barley. See Burns's poem, "John Barleycorn: a Ballad," I, 33-35 (Aldine edition).

**225 9 Fornarina**: she is said to have been a baker's daughter with the name Margherita, and is commonly called Raphael's mistress. The name was given to Raphael's famous picture about 1750.

**225 9 Lucretia Borgia** (1480-1519): the daughter of Cardinal Borgia, who afterwards became Pope Alexander VI. She played an important part in the history of her day.

**225 10 model of St. Peter's**: Michelangelo (1475-1564) became architect of St. Peter's, Rome, January 1, 1547.

**225 24 Giotto Di Bondone** (d. 1337), **Giovanni Cimabue** (1240-1302), **Ghirlandaio** (Domenico Bigarde) (1449-1494): early Florentine painters whose work was the inspiration for the greater masters who succeeded them.

**225 27 "Whose names on earth"**: Hazlitt liked to quote these lines, which he thought belonged to Dante. Waller and Glover print a few sentences from Lamb's letter to Bernard Barton (February 17, 1823), which seem to offer an explanation: "I once quoted two lines from a translation of Dante, which Hazlitt very greatly admired, and quoted in a book, as proof of the stupendous power of that poet; but no such lines are to be found in the translation, which has been searched for the purpose. I must have dreamed them, for I am quite certain I did not forge them knowingly. What a misfortune to have a lying memory" (Hazlitt, Works, X, 405-406).

**226 2 "Legend of Good Women"**: Chaucer's work, written about 1385. See Skeat, "Works of Chaucer," Vol. III.

**226 8 Duchess of Newcastle**: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1624-1674), writer of plays, poems, and letters. She was much admired in her day.

**226 8 Mrs. Hutchinson**: Lucy Hutchinson (b. 1620), a most interesting and well-educated woman of the seventeenth century. She wrote the life of her husband, the Puritan colonel, in 1664-1671, but it was not published till 1806.

**226 11 one in the room**: Mary Lamb.

**226 14 Ninon de L'Enclos** (1615-1705), the typical Frenchwoman of the gay seventeenth-century society as well as the leader of fashion in Paris and the friend of wits and poets. Especially noteworthy is her long friendship with Saint-Évremond.

**226 28 Tamerlane**: Timur Lang, the renowned oriental conqueror of the fourteenth century. The name has become vulgarized into Tamerlane or Tamberlane. He has been a popular subject for tragedy. "Monk" Lewis's "Timour," Marlowe's "Tamburlaine," Rowe's "Tamerlane."

**226 28 Ghengis Khan** : Jenghiz Khan (1162-1227), ruler of the Mongols, one of the greatest conquerors that the world has ever seen.

**226 34 "Your most exquisite reason"** : "Twelfth Night," II, iii, 153.

**227 14 Leonardo** : the famous picture of "The Last Supper" by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), painted on the refectory wall of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie at Milan.

**227 17 Menenius** : Menenius Agrippa in Shakspeare's "Coriolanus," II, i.

**227 19 continued H—** : in "Literary Remains" and "Winterslow" this speech is given to Lamb. This has been done in almost every reprint of the essay, likewise in Lucas, "Life of Lamb," I, 388. It seems, however, that the following note by Waller and Glover, Works, XII, 476, is the better explanation :

The Magazine clearly gives it to H—, that is, Leigh Hunt. It is, of course, conceivable that the editor of "Literary Remains" silently corrected an error in the Magazine, but that does not seem likely, because, in the first place, the speech seems more characteristic of Hunt than of Lamb, and secondly, because the volume of the *New Monthly* (XVI) in which the essay appeared contains a list of errata in which two corrections (one of them relating to initials) are made in the essay and yet this "H—" is left uncorrected.

## ON THE FEELING OF IMMORTALITY IN YOUTH

This essay appeared in the *Monthly Magazine*, March, 1827. It was first republished with many changes in Hazlitt's "Literary Remains" (1836), as Essay XV.

**228 1 "Life is a pure flame"** : Thomas Browne, "Hydriotaphia," chap. v.

**228 3 my brother's** : John Hazlitt (1767-1837), the painter. See Introduction, pp. xi and xv.

**228 10 "The vast"** : cf. Addison, "Cato," V, i.

**228 17 "Bidding the lovely scenes"** : Collins, "The Passions," l. 32.

**229 17 "this sensible, warm motion"** : "Measure for Measure," III, i, 120.

**230 1 "wine of life"** : "Macbeth," II, iii, 76.

**230 13 the foolish fat scullion** : "Tristram Shandy," Book V, chap. vii.

**230 note Joseph Fawcett** (1758?-1804) : dissenting minister and poet. He became a very popular preacher in London. Mrs. Siddons and the Kembles are said to have been frequent visitors to his church. His "Art of War" was published in 1795, *not* 1794, as Hazlitt says.

**231 13 "the feast of reason"** : Pope, "Imitations of Horace," Satire I, 128.

232 3 "The stockdove": Thomson, "The Castle of Indolence," Canto i, stanza 4.

232 note Lady Wortley Montague (1690-1762): one of the most interesting women of the eighteenth century. Her letters have given her a high place among the letter writers of the world. For her comments on Fielding and Richardson, see especially the letters dated December 14, 1750, December 8, 1751, October 20, 1752, June 23, 1754, September 22, 1755.

232 note *effendi*: "a Turkish title of respect, chiefly applied to government officials and to members of the learned professions" (New English Dictionary). See Lady Montagu's Letter, May 17, 1717.

232 note "had it not been": Works, II, 254.

232 note she says of Richardson: II, 222 and 285.

233 note *monstrum ingens, biforme*: Æneid, III, 658.

233 note Mr. Moore: Thomas Moore (1779-1852). See Hazlitt's essay in the "Spirit of the Age," IV, 353.

233 note Lady Mary: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. See above.

234 30 Cathedral at Peterborough: Hazlitt's father and mother were married at Peterborough, January 19, 1766. See Introduction, p. ix. He came back to the place probably in the years when he lived at Wem, perhaps in 1796. See Introduction, p. xv.

In the south aisle of the Peterborough Cathedral is a monument marking the former resting place of Mary Queen of Scots. By order of her son, James I, in 1612, her remains were removed to the Chapel of Henry VII in Westminster Abbey.

235 18 "the purple light of love": Gray, "The Progress of Poesy," l. 41:

The bloom of young Desire and purple light of Love.

235 31 "the Raphael grace": Pope, "Moral Essays," VIII, 36.

236 2 "gain a new vigour": Cowper, "Charity," l. 104.

237 33 "From the dungeon": Coleridge, "Sonnet to Schiller." See "On Reading Old Books," p. 102.

238 4 Don Carlos: see "On the Fear of Death," p. 120.

238 13 my miniature-picture: one which was painted by his brother while the Hazlitts were in America. It is mentioned in "Liber Amoris," Letter VI.

238 22 "That time is past": Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey," ll. 83-85.

239 10 "Even from the tomb": Gray, "Elegy," ll. 91-92.

239 18 "all the life of life": see Burns, "Lament for James."

239 27 "From the last dregs": Dryden, "Aurengzebe," Act IV, scene i.

240 20 "treason domestic": "Macbeth," III, ii, 24-25.

240 32 "reverbs its own hollowness": "King Lear," I, i, 145.

## ON READING NEW BOOKS

This essay first appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* for July, 1827. It was published with some changes in "Sketches and Essays" (1839). This paper was written during the author's stay at Florence in May, 1825. See "Memoirs," II, 154. The present text is a reprint from the magazine.

**242 7 Sir Walter writes no more :** Scott died in 1832, seven years after the writing of this essay. "The Betrothed" and "The Talisman" appeared in 1825, "Woodstock," "Fair Maid of Perth," "Anne of Geierstein" were the important books of those seven years.

**242 8 Lord Byron :** Byron had lived abroad seven or eight years and had died in Greece on the nineteenth of April, 1824.

**242 note** The complete sentence was, "And give me leave to tell your lordships, by the way, that statutes are not like women, for they are not yet the worse for being old" ("Speech on the Dissolution of Parliament" (1676), included in Hazlitt's "Eloquence of the British Senate"). George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham (1627-1688), is famous for having written "The Rehearsal."

**244 1 "has just come" :** "Richard III," I, i, 21.

**244 17 to give sentence of life or death :** this phrase was none too strong for Hazlitt, who after many experiences had suffered from prejudiced criticism.

**244 31 circulating libraries :** see the interesting account of the "Books of Lydia Languish's Circulating Library," in G. H. Nettleton's "The Major Dramas of Richard Brinsley Sheridan." See introduction, pp. lxxviii-lxxvii (Ginn and Company).

**245 1 the Waverley romances :** published anonymously until 1827, when Scott publicly confessed at the dinner given for the benefit of the Edinburgh Theatrical Fund, February 23, 1827.

**246 12 Manuscript of Cicero's :** Cardinal Angelo Maia (1782-1854), an Italian cardinal, noted as a philologist and antiquary, discovered various manuscripts and pamphlets and edited Cicero's "De Republica."

**246 15 A Noble Lord :** the Marquis of Blandford bought Valdorfer's edition of Boccaccio for £2260 at the Roxburghe Sale in 1812.

**246 23 Mr. Thomas Taylor :** Thomas Taylor (1758-1835), the Platonist. "The old Duke of Norfolk (Bernard Edward, twelfth Duke, 1765-1842) was his patron and locked up nearly the whole of Taylor's edition of Plato (5 vols., 1804) in his library." See Works, note xii, 484.

**246 note Critique of Pure Reason :** the famous philosophical treatise by Kant in 1783 and second edition with modifications in 1787.

**247 2 Ireland's celebrated . . . forgery :** the forgery, "Vortigern," by William Henry Ireland (1777-1835), was produced by the famous actor, Kemble, at Drury Lane Theater on April 2, 1796. After a visit to Stratford in 1794 Ireland had begun a series of forgeries of mortgage deeds, a transcript of "Lear," extract from "Hamlet," a new blank-verse play in Shakspeare's handwriting, called "Vortigern" and "Rowena." The analysis of this play led to a complete exposure of the fraud. For a satisfactory account see J. A. Farrer, "Literary Forgeries," chap. xiv.

**247 note G. D. :** Lamb's friend George Dyer (1755-1841). His "History of the University and Colleges of Cambridge" was published in two volumes in 1814. See a most interesting chapter on Dyer in Lucas, "Life of Lamb," I, 144-167. Lamb conferred immortality upon him in his essays, "Oxford in the Vacation" and "Amicus Redivivus."

In reference to the number of corrections in the "History," Lamb called Dyer "Cancellarius Major." Hazlitt's essay, "On the Look of a Gentleman" (1821), speaks of Dyer as one of "God Almighty's Gentlemen." See Works, VII, 219-220.

**247 note Another friend :** Leigh Hunt. See his essay, "Jack Abbot's Breakfast."

**247 note Peel's coffee-house :** this was one of the coffeehouses of the Johnsonian period at Nos. 177-178 Fleet Street, east corner of Fetter Lane. Here was long preserved a portrait of Dr. Johnson, on the key-stone of a chimney piece, said to have been painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. See Timbs, "Club Life in London," p. 361.

**248 3 Buonaparte . . . was fond of it :** Hazlitt said that this was one reason why he liked Napoleon.

**248 16 We may observe of late a strong craving after *Memoirs* :** perhaps a reference to Walter Savage Landor's "Imaginary Conversations," the first series of which appeared in 1824. Landor began these at Florence, where Hazlitt in May, 1825, wrote this essay.

**248 22 Petrarch and Laura :** Petrarch (1304-1374), the celebrated Italian poet and humanist and friend of Dante. It was not uncommon for poets in the Middle Ages to choose some lady to whom homage might be paid in sonnet or other lyric poems; for example, Petrarch and Laura, Dante and Beatrice, &c.

**248 23 Abelard and Eloise :** Abelard was a distinguished French scholar and preceptor of the twelfth century. Of his love for Héloïse, the abbess, many poems have been written. Especially well known is Pope's poem. The letters of the two lovers have been frequently printed.

**248 30 Lucan** (39-65 A.D.): a Latin poet and prose writer, author of "Pharsalia," an epic poem in ten books dealing with the civil war between Cæsar and Pompey.

The passage in Rowe's translation is as follows :

Ah! my once greatest lord! ah, cruel hour!  
Is thy victorious head in fortune's power?  
Since miseries my baneful love pursue,  
Why did I wed thee, only to undo?  
But see, to death, my willing neck I bow;  
Atone the angry gods by one kind blow.

**249 8 "proud as when blue Iris bends" :** "Troilus and Cressida," I, iii, 380.

**251 24 Sadler's Wells or the Adelphi :** two theaters of the time. The former was first built in 1753 on the site of a medicinal well discovered in 1683 by a Mr. Sadler. The Adelphi was built on the Strand, London, in 1806, and was the "home of melodrama and screaming farce." In Walter Scott's "Diary" this is spoken of as Dan Ferry's Theater, called the Adelphi: "supping on oysters and porter in honest Dan Ferry's house, like a squirrel's cage, above the Adelphi Theater" (Lockhart, IV, 75).

**251 26 "full of wise saws" :** "As You Like It," II, vii, 156.

**252 3 euphuism :** a common noun from John Lyly's celebrated romance "Euphues" (1578-1579). The book portrayed the exaggerated style of language of the day and had a strong, though brief, influence upon literary fashions. For satiric treatment of euphuism, see Shakspere's "Love's Labour's Lost." Sir Walter Scott showed a mistaken conception of euphuism in "The Monastery." The best study of the book and the fashion it presented is by Friedrich Landmann in "Der Euphuismus, sein Wesen, seine Quelle, seine Geschichte." Giessen, 1881.

**252 14 Rossini** (1792-1868): celebrated Italian composer, well known in London about 1823.

**252 18 "an insolent piece of paper" :** Massinger's "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," Act IV, scene iii, where the line reads "a piece of arrogant paper." Mr. J. Rogers Rees has called my attention to a copy of this play (in his possession) which Hazlitt edited, with an introduction, in 1817.

**252 26 Longinus** (210-273): Greek critic and philosopher who is supposed to have written the essay "On the Sublime." For the reference see section ix.

**252 31 Irving's Orations :** see above, p. 343. See also Hazlitt's essay on Irving in his "Spirit of the Age," IV, 222.

**252 33** *Voltaire's jests and the Jew's Letters*: Voltaire maintained that the Jews were the enemies of the human race. See "*Œuvres*" (edited by Baudoin, 1826), XX, 396, 455. Dr. Philip le Fanu published in 1777 a translation of the Abbé Guénée's "*Lettres de certaines juives à M. Voltaire.*"

**253 2** *Rent and the Poor-Laws*: that was a seething time for the English government, and these were great questions. It was not until 1832 that the New Reform Bill became a law. The New Poor Law was enacted in 1834.

**253 5** *Pascal's Provincial Letters*: Pascal (1623-1662), the French geometrician and philosopher, wrote eighteen letters over the *nom de plume*, Louis de Montalte, professedly to a friend in the provinces. Hence the epistles are known as "*Les Provinciales.*" They defended the doctrine of the Port-Royal monastery against the Jesuits.

**253 7** *Princess of Cleves*: "*La Princesse de Clèves,*" a novel (1677) by Madame de La Fayette, deals with the court of Henry II and Mary Stuart.

**253 32** *floci-nauci*: see Shenstone's Letter XXI (1741):

For whatever the world might esteem in poor Somerville, I really find that I loved him for nothing so much as his *floci-nauci-nihili-pili*-fication of money.

Shenstone's Works (edition of 1777).

**253 34** "*flames in the forehead*": "*Lycidas,*" l. 171.

**254 29** *Condorcet* (1743-1794): French mathematician, interested in political economy and theology. See Dowden, "*French Literature,*" p. 255:

Condorcet . . . bringing together the ideas of economists and historians, traced human progress through the past and uttered ardent prophecies of human perfectibility in the future.

**254** note This note was omitted from the reprint in "*Sketches and Essays*" (1839).

**255 7** *The Enquiry concerning Political Justice*: published in 1793.

**255 21** "*By Heavens I'd rather be*": Wordsworth's sonnet, "*The world is too much with us.*"

**256 2** "*trampled under the hoofs*": see Burke, "*Reflections on the Revolution in France*" (edited by Payne), II, 93.

**257** note *sent to Coventry*: see New English Dictionary:

To send (a person) to Coventry; to exclude him from the society of which he is a member on account of objectionable conduct; to refuse to associate with him.

See also *Notes and Queries*, ninth series, IV, 264, 335.

**257** note **Parthian retreat** : see Smith's "Classical Dictionary":

The Parthians were a very warlike people, and were especially celebrated as horse-archers. Their tactics became so celebrated as to pass into a proverb. Their mail-clad horsemen spread like a cloud round the hostile army, and poured in a shower of darts, and then evaded any closer conflict by a rapid flight, during which they still shot their arrows back upon the enemy.

**257** note **Queen's Matrimonial Ladder** : one of William Hone's (1780-1842) squibs published in 1820 and illustrated with cuts by Cruikshank. The complete title was "The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder, a National Toy, with Fourteen Step Scenes and Illustrations in Verse." This refers to Queen Caroline. See "Dictionary of National Biography" for an interesting account of the stormy life of Hone.

### ON DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE

This paper first appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* for August, 1827. It was republished in "Sketches and Essays."

**260** 25 "discourse of reason" : see "Hamlet," I, ii, 150.

**261** 33 Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* : canto i, stanza 64.

**264** 15 *sent to Coventry* : Hazlitt likes to use this phrase. See p. 257 and note.

**264** 22 "into our heart of hearts" : "Hamlet," III, ii, 78.

**264** 27 "that enrich the shops" : Roscommon's translation of Horace's "Art of Poetry."

**264** 30 "That bring their authors" : the source of this quotation is unknown.

**265** 11 Walton's *Angler* : "The Compleat Angler" first appeared in 1653 ; it was greatly altered in the second edition in 1655. Editions and reprints innumerable have been published since that time.

**265** 12 "That dallies" : "Twelfth Night," II, iv, 49 :

And dallies with the innocence of love  
Like the old age.

**267** 5 "Wit at the helm" : Gray, "The Bard," l. 74 :

Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm.

**267** 12 a *butt*, according to the *Spectator* : see "Spectator," No. 47, April 24, 1711, a paper on laughter :

I mean those honest gentlemen that are always exposed to the wit and raillery of their well-wishers and companions ; that are pelted by men, women and children, friends and foes, and in a word, stand as "butts" in conversation, for every one to shoot at that pleases.

268<sup>1</sup> dedicated his *Cain*: "*Cain, A Mystery*" was begun on July 16, 1821, and finished September 9, and was published in December. The publication of the poem brought forth hostile reviews and attacks. Scott cordially accepted the dedication.

270 4 "*hew you as a carcase*": "*Julius Cæsar*," II, i, 174.

270 14 *tempora mollia fandi*: *Æneid*, IV, 293-294:

The favorable times or occasions for speaking.

270 32 "*Not to admire*": Pope, "*Imitations of Horace*," Sixth Epistle of the First Book, ll. 1-2.

271 4 *Westminster School of Reform*: the *Westminster Review* was established in 1823 by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and others. This paper gave a great impetus to Radicalism through the contribution of Bowring, the first editor, James and John Stuart Mill, and others.

271 8 the *Scotch*, as a nation: see a very uncomplimentary essay on "*The Scotch Character*" by Hazlitt, published in the *Liberal* (1822) and republished for the first time in *Works*, XII, 253-259. Lamb had something of the same aversion as expressed in his *Elia* essay, "*Imperfect Sympathies*": "I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen."

271 21 "*milk of human kindness*": "*Macbeth*," I, v, 15.

### ON A SUN-DIAL

This paper was first published in the *New Monthly Magazine*, October, 1827, and was republished in "*Sketches and Essays*" (1839). It is said to have been written in 1825.

274 1 "*To carve out dials*": "*3 Henry VI*," II, v, 24.

274 14 along the *Brenta*: on his trip to the Continent (August, 1824, to October, 1825) Hazlitt went through France and Italy. The reference here is to his trip from Padua to Venice, *Works*, IX, 266.

275 11 "*morals on the time*": "*As You Like It*," II, vii, 29.

277 6 *L'Amour fait passer*: "*love makes the time pass*," which the wits travestied into "*Time makes love pass (away)*."

277 18 "*How sweet the moonlight*": "*Merchant of Venice*," V, i, 54.

278 22 the account given by Rousseau: probably the story told in "*Les Confessions*," *Partie II*, Liv. XI.

278 30 "*Allons, mon fils*": See "*Les Confessions*," *Partie I*, Livre I:

Come, my son, I am more a child than you.

279 9 "*lend it both an understanding*": "*Hamlet*," I, ii, 250.

279 28 "with its brazen throat": "King John," III, iii, 37-39:

if the midnight bell,  
Did with his iron tongue and brazen mouth  
Sound on into the drowsy ear of night.

279 30 "swinging slow": "Il Penseroso," l. 76.

280 6 I confess, nothing . . . interests me: see Hazlitt's essays, "On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth," pp. 228 ff., and "On the Past and Future," pp. 142 ff.

280 15 Even George IV.: this sentence is omitted from the reprint in "Sketches and Essays."

281 15 "the poor man's only music": Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight," l. 29.

282 4 "goes to church in a coranto": "Twelfth Night," I, iii, 137.

282 16 "Sing those witty rhymes": Wordsworth, "The Fountain," ll. 13-15.

282 22 Macheath's execution: "The Beggar's Opera."

283 8 "as in a map the voyager": Cowper, "The Task," VI, 17.

283 22 Robinson Crusoe lost his reckoning: "Robinson Crusoe" (edited by Aitken), p. 69:

After I had been there about ten or twelve days, it came into my thoughts that I should lose my reckoning of time for want of books and pen and ink, and should even forget the Sabbath days from the working days; but to prevent this, I cut it with my knife upon a large post, in capital letters.

283 34 "with light-winged toys": "Othello," I, iii, 269.

284 20 I have done something of the kind: Mr. Waller thinks that Hazlitt here probably refers to the description of his father in "My First Acquaintance with Poets," pp. 175 ff.

## ON CANT AND HYPOCRISY

This essay consists of two parts published in the *London Weekly Review*, December 6 and 13, 1828. It was afterwards published with some changes in "Sketches and Essays" (1839).

285 1 "If to do": "Merchant of Venice," I, ii, 11 ff.

285 3 Curl: Edmund Curli (1675-1747), prominent as a bookseller and editor. He quarreled with Pope, and at one time, for some of his publications, had to stand in the pillory at Charing Cross.

285 9 the young Earl of Warwick: the story is told that just before his death Addison called to him his stepson, Warwick, and said, "See in what peace a Christian can die." See Young, "Conjectures on Original Composition," Works, p. 136.

285 18 "The spirit was willing": Matthew xxvi, 41.

286 30 *Video meliora proboque*: Ovid, "Metamorphoses," VII, 20. See *Notes and Queries*, ninth series, V, 40.

287 29 The scene between the Abbot: the Abbot Paul and the Porter, in Sheridan's "Duenna" (1775).

288 3 *olla podrida*: a Spanish phrase meaning literally "a rotten pot." A favorite Spanish dish consisting of various kinds of meat and vegetables; hence a hodgepodge. It is often mentioned in "Don Quixote."

288 10 *Fornarina*: see above, p. 378.

288 18 "Who shone all": Thomson, "Castle of Indolence," canto i, stanza 69.

289 31 remarks . . . of Lord Shaftesbury: see his "Characteristics," Part I, section 2.

290 10 "upon this bank": "Macbeth," I, vii, 6.

291 2 *Vallombrosa*: "Paradise Lost," I, 302-303:

Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks  
In Vallombrosa,

It is now the site of an ancient monastery founded in the eleventh century.

291 3 *Grand Chartreux*: La Grand Chartreuse, the mother house of the order of Carthusian monks, in southern France near Grenoble.

291 19 At the feast of Ramadan: the feast of *el-Eed-es-Sagheer* ("the minor festival") is a Mohammedan celebration lasting for three days and following the month of Ramadan.

292 15 "mighty coil and pudder": "King Lear," III, ii, 50.

293 8 *Men err*: with this sentence the first part of the essay concludes.

294 14 French *blacklegs*: "Blacklegs" is originally the word for turf-swindler; hence gambler.

295 9 *Manichean*: at the close of the third century the three chief religious systems were *Christian*, *Neo-Platonism*, and *Manicheism*, the last-named for Mani (*Manichaïos*). It was a dualistic and universal religion.

295 10 *Gnostic*: the gnostics were sects which arose in the Christian church in the first century. They held that knowledge rather than faith was important for salvation, and they rejected the literal interpretation of the Scriptures.

295 19 *Eremites and friars*: "Paradise Lost," III, 474-475.

297 1 the very origin of the term, *cant*: See New English Dictionary:

Presumably represents *cant-us*, "singing," "song," "chant," but the details of the derivations and development are unknown.

**297 19 Mr. Liberal Snake**: in "Vivian Grey," the first novel by Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield (1804-1881). The novel had appeared in 1827, only about a year before this essay was written. This was one of the novels by a writer of the so-called *dandy school*, which included Disraeli, Bulwer Lytton, Lister, and Theodore Hook.

**297 20 Mr. Theodore Hook** (1788-1841): dramatist and novelist. He was famous as a conversationalist and *improvisatore* and edited the *New Monthly Magazine*.

### A FAREWELL TO ESSAY-WRITING

This paper was written at Winterslow, February 20, 1828, and was published in the *London Weekly Review* for the 29th of March, 1828. It was printed in the Winterslow volume, 1850.

**298 1 "This life is best"**: "Cymbeline," III, iii, 29.

**298 2 Food, warmth, sleep, and a book**: in Stevenson's "Celestial Surgeon" we find:

If morning skies,  
Books and my food and summer rain,  
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain.

**298 3 *ultima thule***: Thule was the name given by the ancients to the most northern country with which they were acquainted. Hence the Romans called it *ultima Thule*, "the farthest Thule."

**298 5 "A friend in your retreat"**: Cowper, "Retirement," ll. 741-742.

**298 13 "done its spiriting gently"**: "Tempest," I, ii, 299.

**298 26 "the spring comes slowly"**: Coleridge, "Christabel," Part I.

**298 27 "fields are dank"**: Milton, "Sonnet to Lawrence," l. 2.

**299 15 "left its little life in air"**: Pope, "Windsor Forest," ll. 133-

134:

Oft as the mounting larks their notes prepare  
They fall and leave their little lives in air.

**299 25 "peep through the blanket"**: "Macbeth," I, v, 51:

Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark.

**300 10 "open all the cells"**: Cowper, "The Task," VI, 11-12.

**300 18 Theodore and Honoria**: a story which Dryden paraphrased from Boccaccio.

**300 22 "Of all the cities"**: "Theodore and Honoria," ll. 1-2.

**300 32 "Which when Honoria"**: *ibid.* ll. 342-343.

**301 1 "And made th' insult"**: Dryden, "Sigismonda and Guiscardo," ll. 668-669. Dryden's lines are:

And made th' insult, which in his gift appears.

**301 12 I am much pleased** : this sentence was omitted from the Winterslow edition and several other reprints.

**301 29 "Fall'n was Glenartny's stately tree"** : from the last stanza of Scott's "Glenfinlas, or Lord Ronald's Coronach."

**302 12 Mr. Gifford** : see the controversy between Gifford and Hazlitt. The sentence is quoted in full by Hazlitt in his article on Gifford in the "Spirit of the Age" :

It was amusing to see this person, sitting like one of Brower's Dutch boors over his gin and tobacco-pipes, and fancying himself a Leibnitz.

**302 17 I am rather disappointed** : this sentence was omitted from the Winterslow reprint.

**303 4 "the admired of all observers"** : "Hamlet," III, i, 162.

**303 14 What I have here stated** : the passage beginning with this paragraph and reaching to "concerning certain prejudices," p. 304, has been left out of the Winterslow edition.

**304 12 pleasant "Companion"** : Leigh Hunt.

**304 17 Aut Cæsar aut nullus** : old Latin proverb, "Either Cæsar or no one." In Hazlitt's essay, "Should Actors sit in Boxes," he writes, "The motto of a great actor should be, *Aut Cæsar aut nihil*." See Suetonius, I, 79.

**304 30 L—** : probably Lamb.

**305 6 Mr. Godwin writing to Mr. Wordsworth** : Lamb has told the story of the production and failure of this play written by Godwin. Every one interested in the people of that time should read his account in his essay in the *London Magazine* on "The Old Actors." "The Antonio" was performed at Drury Lane, December 13, 1800.

**305 15 Aristotles sitting in judgment** : there was much disapproval of the dramatic innovations of Euripides. See Aristotle's, "Poetics."

**305 21 "Nor can I think"** : Dryden, "The Hind and the Panther," I, 315.

**305 26 At the time I lived here formerly** : see Introduction, p. xxiii. Hazlitt had gone from London to Winterslow immediately after his marriage in 1808 and lived there till 1812, when he returned to London.

**305 32 Chaucer's *Flower and Leaf*** : this poem is no longer attributed to Chaucer. In his lecture on Chaucer and Spenser, Hazlitt showed a special liking for this poem and quoted from it at length. See Works, V, 27 seq. With little success Dryden made this poem over into heroic couplets.

**306 9 I used to walk out at this time** : this refers to one of the visits of the Lambs to Winterslow, perhaps to that one made in 1809 of which Lamb writes in his letter to Coleridge, October 30, 1809 :

I have but this moment received your letter dated the 9th instant, having just come off a journey from Wiltshire, where I have been with Mary on a visit to Hazlitt. The journey has been of infinite service to her. We have had nothing but sunshiny days and daily walks from eight to twenty miles a day, have seen Wilton, Salisbury, Stonehenge, &c. Her illness lasted but six weeks; it left her weak, but the country has made us whole.

For an account of this visit see p. xxiv. See also Mary Lamb's letter to Mrs. Hazlitt, for November 7.

**306 19** People then told me: Lamb had evidently been of Hazlitt's opinion regarding Claude, for he had written to Hazlitt on March 15, 1806, after a visit with Manning to some of the galleries: "*Mon Dieu!* Such Claudes! Four Claudes bought for more than £10,000 (those who talk of Wilson being equal to Claude are either mainly ignorant or stupid); one of these was perfectly miraculous."

**306 23** hashed mutton with Amelia's: reference to the famous scene in Fielding's "*Amelia*" (Book X, chap. v) in which Amelia, sitting down in her husband's absence to the hashed mutton she had carefully prepared for him, denied herself half a pint of wine to save "the little sum of sixpence . . . while her husband was paying a debt of several guineas incurred by the ace of trumps being in the hands of his adversary."

**307 11** "And curtainclose such scene": Collins, "Ode on the Poetical Character," l. 76.

### THE SICK CHAMBER

This paper was printed in the *Monthly Magazine*, August, 1830, a few weeks before Hazlitt's death in September. "A Free Admission" had appeared in a previous issue of the same year. Alexander Ireland was the first to reprint this essay in his volume of *Selections* (1889). He states that this is the last essay which Hazlitt wrote. The spirit of the paper reminds us of that later enthusiast and Hazlitt admirer, Stevenson. See above, p. 359.

**308 24** "the body of this death": Romans vii, 24.

**308 25** "cooped and cabined in": "*Macbeth*," III, iv, 24.

**308 28** "peep through the blanket": *ibid.* I, v, 51.

**309 8** "a consummation devoutly": "*Hamlet*," III, i, 9.

**309 12** *Hoc erat in votis*: Horace, "Satires," II, vi, 1.

**310 3** "In pensive place obscure": this passage is quoted from Lamb, "*John Woodvil*," Act V, scene i.

**310 6** "vows made in pain": "*Paradise Lost*," IV, 97.

**310 13** "The Devil was sick": Rabelais, Book IV, chap. xxiv.

**310 29** "like life and death": Lamb, "*John Woodvil*," Act II, scene ii.

311 2 "trouble deaf Heaven": Shakspeare, Sonnet XXIX.

311 6 "moralise our complaints": "As You Like It," II, i, 44.

311 29 "they have drugged my posset with": "Macbeth," II, ii, 6.

311 31 "puzzling o'er the doubt": Cowper, "The Needless Alarm," ll. 77-78:

That sage they seem'd, as lawyers o'er a doubt,  
Which, puzzling long, at last they puzzle out.

312 26 "Like Samson his green wythes": Cowper, "The Task," V, 737:

With as much ease as Samson his green withes.

313 7 *Metastasio*: Pietro Trepassi (assumed name, Metastasio) (1698-1782), Italian poet and dramatist, remarkable for the purity of his diction. For the lines see his "Temistocle," III, 2.

313 27 "a world, both pure and good": Wordsworth, "Personal Talk," l. 34.

314 7 *History of a Foundling*: "The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling" (1749), by Henry Fielding.

314 25 "We see the children": Wordsworth, "Intimations of Immortality," ll. 170-171.

315 2 *Journey to Lisbon*: "Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon" (1755), by Henry Fielding.

315 3 *Paul Clifford*: a novel by Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873), published in 1830, intended to promote a reform in criminal law. The novel was widely criticized.

315 23 "The true pathos": Burns, "Epistle to Dr. Blacklock."

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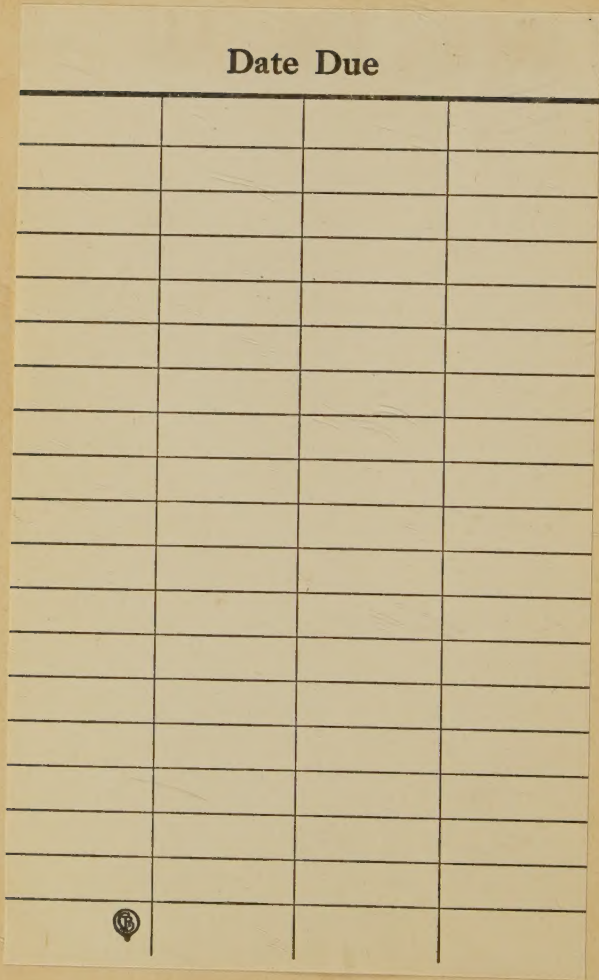
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